Hafa Adai!

Bill hikes NMI's share of money recovered from IPI debtors. PAGE 5

5 confirmed, 3 probable leptospirosis cases in Guam. PAGE 6

75¢

Saipan Tribune

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SURF'S UP!
Two prepositioned ships on the Saipan lagoon frame this windsurfer who managed to glide effortlessly through the waters off Micro Beach yesterday despite the rough seas. About a dozen windsurfers took advantage of yesterday's strong winds to ply the waters of the Saipan lagoon on their wind-driven surfboards. As odd as it was to see so many people on the beach all at once on a Tuesday, it must have been the beautiful weather and strong wind that motivated these surfers for a bout of windsurfing.
NEIL FAMA

1 killed after car drives off cliff

By KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA
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REPORTER

A vehicle drove off an area of Suicide Cliff in Marpi at around 4pm yesterday, plunging into the rocks below and killing the driver.

Department of Public Safety spokesperson Dre Pangelinan later released a statement that police at the scene found the car's driver to be "unre-

See KILLED on Page 4

This photo on the Facebook page of the Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services shows the wrecked and burning vehicle.
DFEMS

SCC wants IPI held accountable

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

The Saipan Chamber of Commerce asked the Commonwealth Casino Commission yesterday to hold Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC accountable for their violations of labor laws, wage and hour laws, and Occupa-

See SCC on Page 4

> No investor that touts a $7-billion casino investment should have any difficulty completing their [project] and paying their past due payroll, taxes, and fees timely– even in a pandemic.

Browne, IPI found in contempt

By KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA
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REPORTER

The U.S District Court for the NMI found both Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC and its chief executive officer, Donald Browne, in contempt yesterday for noncompliance with court orders.

According to an order from U.S. District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Ramona Manglona, the court found IPI in contempt of court for its willful delay in complying with the court's orders despite having been ordered as early

See BROWNE on Page 4

CNMI positive total now at 113

By JUSTINE NAUTA
justine_nauta@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Four more travelers who recently arrived on Saipan tested positive for COVID-19 last Monday and yesterday, raising the CNMI's cumulative total to 113.

According to a Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. statement, two passengers tested positive last Dec. 7 during

See POSITIVE on Page 4

COMMUNITY VULNERABILITY

LEGEND:
- **Red:** Least safe
- **Orange**
- **Yellow**
- **Blue**
- **Green:** Safest

Source: Office of the Governor

AT A GLANCE

As of 6pm, Dec. 8, 2020

GUAM	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	7,004	15	7,019
Recovered	6,056	192	6,248
Active	643	15	658
Deaths	113	0	113
Cumulative Number of Persons Tested			85,864

SAIPAN	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	109	4	113
Traced via Travel Screening	83	0	83
Traced via Community Screening	26	0	26
Deaths	2	0	2
Cumulative Number of Persons Tested			22,633*
Days since last community transmission			111

*Total count includes the number of persons tested on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. With guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CHCC has opted not to report active and recovered cases. The CHCC COVID-19 dashboard will be undergoing maintenance until further notice.

Source: Joint Information Center - Guam, Commonwealth Health Care Corp.

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Joe Biden will nominate four-star Army general Lloyd J. Austin to be secretary of defense.
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GOOD HOUSEKEEPING
Homemade ornaments are a fun thing to do and a way to add meaning to your decorations.
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SCAN ME WITH A COMPATIBLE QR READER TO KEEP UPDATED ON ALL THE LATEST NEWS.

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Local

Sablan sets mission for LGBTQ+ protections in NMI

By JUSTINE NAUTA
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REPORTER

It was a 2019 article in the *Saipan Tribune* that got Tyra Lyn Sablan started in her LGBTQ+ advocacy journey.

The article, which was published on June 13, 2019, highlighted what Sablan thought was a dismaying reality: that the CNMI ranks low in a national review of LGBTQ+ laws and policies among American territories.

Sablan

Sablan, a 41-year-old transgender woman, saw that as an opportunity to advocate for LGBTQ+ rights and concerns and she is now reaching out to other like-minded groups, politicians, and activists to improve what the Movement Advancement Project and Lambda Legal call the "Overall Policy Tally" of the CNMI—the combined laws and policies that impact the LGBTQ+ community and promote more equality for the LGBTQ+ in the CNMI.

In an earlier email to *Saipan Tribune*, Sablan said: "Being that I just moved back home to Saipan after being gone for almost 20 years, [the *Saipan Tribune* article] inspired me to start a grassroots movement to advance awareness through education and legislation for the protection of LGBT people in the CNMI."

Toward that end, Sablan created the non-profit group T-Project, which she said will work with Frankie Eliptico, president of Pride Marianas, and Dr. Jennifer F. Maratita, founder and lead of grassroots organization Pride Marianas Youth, to make sure there's a safe place where any person—whether LGBTQ+ or not, of whatever age, race, color, or gender—can go to for the correct source of information on LGBTQ+ topics. T-Project also aims to provide services in helping with name change, getting identification, providing sources of information on transition-related topics such as health and even a place where parents of transgender youth can go to for sources of credible and reliable information within the vast network of LGBT advocates and providers.

Sablan also recently met with Rep. Tina Sablan (D-Saipan) to propose several bills that offer protections for LGBTQ+ people. She said that the most important thing for the youth is to know that their government recognizes them as human beings. Tyra Lyn Sablan hopes that these proposed bills will be motivate the next CNMI Legislature to take up legal reforms such as equal employment opportunity for LGBTQ+ people, putting in place a hate crime law, transgender health access, and the inclusion of gender identity and sexual orientation in sex discrimination laws. Tyra Lyn Sablan emphasized that although bills like these have already been introduced at the federal level, her mission is to bring these laws locally.

As an example, a 14-year-old in the CNMI who is transitioning or wants to transition could not go into counseling without parental consent. Tyra Lyn Sablan wants to change this and push for a law in the CNMI where such a youth can go into counseling without needing that consent and can be confident that nothing from that counseling will go back to their parents.

"I want to use the nonprofit organization to help advance the movement of LGBT rights here in the CNMI," said Sablan.

Right now, she said that T-Project is in the "very early stages" and is looking for volunteers. She aims to have the nonprofit organization incorporated in the next couple of weeks.

LGBTQ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning. The + sign stands for all the communities included in the LGBT spectrum.

In the *Saipan Tribune* article last year, it quoted the MAP report as saying that, of the five territories examined (Guam, American Samoa, CNMI, Puerto Rico, and U.S. Virgin Islands), Puerto Rico has the highest overall LGBTQ+ policy tally (21.75 out of a potential 40.5) as well as the highest sexual orientation policy tally (11.5/20) and gender identity policy tally (10.25/20.5). Based on its LGBT-related laws and policies, Puerto Rico has a similar overall LGBT policy tally as Delaware and Maine.

The Northern Mariana Islands is ranked with Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and American Samoa as having a "low" LGBT policy tally. American Samoa and the Northern Mariana Islands fall between North Dakota, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and South Carolina (0.5/40.5), while the U.S. Virgin Islands (5.5/40.5) falls between Arizona and Kentucky. Guam (7/40.5) falls between Kentucky and Indiana," said *Saipan Tribune*.

Pearl Harbor dead remembered in ceremony shrunk by pandemic

By AUDREY McAVOY
ASSOCIATED PRESS

HONOLULU (AP)—U.S. servicemen and women and National Park Service officials gathered at Pearl Harbor on Monday to remember those killed in the attack—but elderly survivors stayed home to pay their respects from afar to avoid health risks from the coronavirus pandemic.

The USS Arizona battleship bell rang at 7:55 a.m., the minute the attack began 79 years ago, to start a moment of silence. F-22 jets then flew overhead in missing man formation.

The Arizona today lies at the bottom of the harbor, where it sank shortly being hit by two bombs. The battleship lost 1,177 sailors and Marines, including more than 900 who remain entombed on board.

The U.S. military streamed the ceremony live online for survivors and others unable to attend in person.

"I think what we see today here is the resolve, despite a pandemic, for us to be able to pay our respects, to thank the greatest generation," said Adm. John Aquilino, the commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, said in his keynote address. "It also is a reminder to all that nothing will stop us."

Marines performing a rifle salute wore black masks during the ceremony, which featured a smaller crowd than in typical years.

Aquilino highlighted the

See PEARL on Page 4

Search for NMC's new president continues

By JUSTINE NAUTA
justine_nauta@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Northern Marianas College has ratcheted up its search for a new president and expects it will already have one by the first quarter of 2021.

Charles Cepeda, NMC's board of regents chairperson and the one leading the search committee, said that many people have applied for the position and multiple applications have been submitted through the email address provided when NMC announced the job vacancy last November 2020.

In a separate interview with NMC's interim president Frankie Eliptico, he said that the search was prompted soon after he declined the job. He confirmed that the college broadcasted the job offer both locally and internationally, which means they will be accepting applicants from on-island and off-island, whoever is qualified for the job.

Cepeda

The people who are in the presidential search committee are Cepeda, regent Elaine Hocog Orilla, regent Irene T. Torres, regent Jesse M. Tudela, Associated Students of NMC president Maia Pangelinan, Faculty Senate president Dr. Laura Taylor, Staff Senate president Geraldine Rodgers, and administrator representative Maria Aguon.

Cepeda said that these eight people are in charge of the questions that the committee will ask during the interview with applicants, the criteria for the qualifications, and what they think of each individual that applies.

Next, the committee would recommend to the Board of Regents their Top 3 choices. Then the BOR would go through their own second interview, and then the BOR would select the likely candidate.

The last day to submit applications is Dec. 21, which gives applicants, off-island and on-island, ample time to submit

See SEARCH on Next Page

Free support groups for family caregivers of persons with dementia to feature audiologist

The online support groups for family caregivers of persons with dementia hosted by the Isa Psychological Services Center at the University of Guam will continue in December, with two sessions featuring Renee L.G. Koffend, who holds a doctorate in audiology and is a licensed and board-certified audiologist at Guam Hearing Doctors. She will present on hearing, hearing loss, and its impact on communication, memory, and balance in persons with dementia.

The sessions are free of charge to partners, family members, and other caregivers of persons with dementia throughout Micronesia. All support groups are client-centered and confidential.

This month's groups will be held at the following times:

■ Dec. 16, Wednesday, 6pm – 8pm (featuring Renee Koffend, Au.D., CCC-A)

■ Dec. 19, Saturday, 10am – noon (featuring Renee Koffend, Au.D., CCC-A)

Koffend will be available after her presentations to answer questions from the group participants.

What to expect

The support groups provide a safe place to share the stresses and challenges, successes and rewards of caring for a loved one with dementia with others who may be going through similar experiences. They also provide a forum for caregivers to participate in presentations led by health care professionals and other community members with expertise in caring for persons with dementia.

The support groups are facilitated by Dr. Iain Twaddle, who holds a doctorate in clinical psychology, of Isa Psychological Services Center; Health Services of the Pacific social worker Rhoda Orallo, who holds a master's in social work; and Isa counselor Nikolas Gutierrez, who holds a bachelor's degree in psychology.

Sign up to participate

The support groups launched in August in collaboration with the UOG School of Health's Guam/Micronesia Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program. They will be held year-round on the first and third Wednesdays and Saturdays of each month at 6pm on Wednesdays and 10am on Saturdays. The support groups will be conducted remotely on Zoom during the pandemic.

To sign up for a family caregiver online support group, call or email Twaddle or Gutierrez at (671) 735-2883 or isa@triton.uog.edu or Orallo (671) 735-3277 or nfc-spmgr@teleguam.net. ***(PR)***

Guam now a trusted travel partner of Hawaii

The Guam Department of Public Health and Social Services has signed an agreement with the State of Hawaii Department of Health designating Guam as a trusted testing and travel partner.

The agreement, entered into on Nov. 20, 2020, establishes that travelers who obtain a negative COVID-19 test result from one of 13 Clinical Laboratories Improvement Amendments or CLIA certified testing locations in Guam will be allowed to bypass the State of Hawaii's mandatory 14-day quarantine.

"Our testing machines and the Guam Public Health Laboratory have always been CLIA certified. We are pleased that Hawaii recognized Guam as a trusted partner as we have always taken the necessary steps to be a certified and licensed through all the proper health-related channels," said DPHSS director Art San Agustin. "This agreement between Guam and Hawaii was just a missing component for Guam travelers to be able to avail of a program that allows for a more convenient journey into Hawaii. We have many residents who travel for medical reasons as well, and having the trusted testing and travel partner agreement in place can help in making the process more comfortable for them."

Hawaii requires all travelers ages 5 and older to take the Nucleic Acid Amplification Test from a CLIA lab and will only accept test results from a trusted testing and travel partner. Tests must be taken no more than 72 hours prior to the flight departure time.

CLIA-certified labs on Guam must fill out in typewritten format the State of Hawaii Safe Travels Program Trusted Testing Partner COVID-19 Test Result Reporting Form to report results.

All travelers must have a negative test result from a trusted testing and travel partner prior to departure. This means the traveler must upload their test result in PDF to an established account at travel.hawaii.gov prior to their flight departing into Hawaii. Alternatively, if the traveler is having difficulty uploading, they may print out a hard copy of the negative test result and bring it to Hawaii in hand for verification. A hard copy in hand is recommended.

If your result returns positive before you travel, do not travel. ***(PR)***

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION
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Website: http://www.nmhcgov.net

AMENDMENT NO. 1
Notice of Re-opening of the Distribution of Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG)-COVID Program Pre-Applications

The Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC) wishes to announce the re-opening of the distribution of pre-applications of the ESG-COVID program made possible through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. As stated on the Office of the Governor's Press Release, dated July 19, 2020, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has awarded the CNMI a total allocation of $1,090,630 in ESG-COVID funds to provide financial assistance for CNMI households, specifically for rental assistance, rental arrears, utility allowance, and security and utility deposits. The assistance period is for a total of (12) months and will be on a first come, first serve basis. NMHC has allocated 25% of the grant for the elderly and disabled population. The purpose of the Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG)-COVID program is to assist individuals and families quickly regain stability in permanent housing after experiencing a housing crisis or homelessness, as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Eligibility Criteria

- Must be impacted by the Coronavirus pandemic (e.g. furloughed, reduction of hours, living in substandard conditions which poses an increased risk of exposure to the disease, etc.)
- Must be a U.S. citizen or qualified alien
- Must meet the income limits (less than 50% of the area median income). See FY 2020 HUD income limits below
- Must be literally homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless and have no other housing options

Application Steps

- Pick up a pre-application at the NMHC Offices on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota or print an application made available on the NMHC website at www.nmhcgov.net.
  Link:https://nmhcgov.net/resources/files/2020%20ESG%20Pre-application%20V2%20updated%2006_29_20.pdf
- Once the pre-application is completed and submitted to the NMHC Offices (you may submit at the front office or in the Drop Box located in front of the building), the case workers will assess the pre-application and determine whether the applicant is eligible for the program. If the applicant is eligible, the case worker will schedule an appointment and immediately notify the applicant on the date and time of intake. If an applicant is deemed ineligible, a notification will be sent to the applicant.
- The case worker will inform the eligible applicant of the next steps once the application process has been completed.

If you have already applied for the ESG-COVID program, the NMHC case workers are currently assessing your pre-applications and you will be contacted for the next steps. On August 21, 2020, NMHC stopped taking pre-applications in order to conduct the screening of a significant number of pre-applications and also to conduct case management. ***NMHC re-reoped the pre-application process on October 28, 2020. You may pick up an HESG pre-application at the NMHC, Saipan Central Office, Rota Field Office, and Tinian Field office. The distribution of pre-applications will extend from November 30, 2020 to December 31, 2020.*** Should you have any questions or need special accommodations, please contact Zenie Mafnas, Deputy Corporate Director, Tricia Tenorio, Planner, or Sweetielyn Sokau, Planning Assistant, at the 234-6866/7689/9447.

NMHC is an equal employment and fair housing public agency"

AMERICA'S SBDC CNMI
AMERICA'S SBDC PALAU

Get Your Business Online with Google

FREE OF CHARGE
DATE: December 10, 2020
TIME: 9:30 am - 11:30 am

Learn about Google My Business, a free tool for local businesses who want to connect with customers on Google Search and Maps. Get hands-on help creating and updating your business profile or a simple website. Participants will learn how customers find your business online and how to promote your business using Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and Smart Campaigns in Googles Ads.

Ltelatk H. Fritz, M.A.
Palau SBDC
Business Advisor &
Center Director

TO REGISTER:
HTTPS://PISBDCN.ECENTER DIRECT.COM/EVENTS/4691

This training will be conducted via Zoom. Upon registration you will be given the Zoom Meeting ID and Password to be able to join the webinar training. Please note that you will need a laptop or iPad to join.

For more information, visit our website at www.pacificsbdc.com or call CNMI SBDC Office at 664-3018.

Disclaimer: The CNMI Small Business Development Center (CNMI SBDC)is a member of the University of Guam Pacific Islands Small Business Development Center (PISBDCN). PISBDCN is partially funded by a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). All opinions, conclusions or recommendations expressed are those of the author (s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the SBA. Requests for reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities will be made if requested at least two weeks in advance. Language assistance services are available for limited English proficient individuals with at least two weeks advance notice. For arrangements, please contact CNMI SBDC Nicole Babauta, P.O. Box 5795 CHRB Saipan, MP 96950, Tel: (670)664-3018, or Email cnmisbdc@pacificsbdc.com. Services are extended to the public on a non-discriminatory basis.

SCC

From Page 1

tional Safety and Health Administration violations.

In a scathing letter to CCC board chair Edward C. Deleon Guerrero, SCC president Velma M. Palacios said: "No investor that touts a $7-billion casino investment should have any difficulty completing their first phase of development and paying their past due payroll, taxes, and fees timely—even in a pandemic."

She said IPI should be held to the same standards as the rest of the business community in practicing good corporate citizenry and governance.

When asked for comments, IPI chief executive officer Donald Browne pointed out that, to date, IPI has invested around $1 billion in the CNMI and paid over $300 million in taxes and fees to the government, more than all of the SCC members combined.

"It's easy to pick on businesses when they're struggling. Rational thinkers know well that the CNMI has been insulated from the effects of the pandemic due to the federal government bailout," Browne said, yet IPI has not received even $1 in federal assistance.

"Once the Keynesian stimulus runs out at the end of this month, the CNMI will need businesses determined to weather the storm," he said.

Browne said they are not giving up without doing everything they can to ensure their existence and the existence of all businesses in the CNMI.

He noted that since the award of the casino license, IPI has created thousands of jobs and generated countless business opportunities for hundreds of local businesses.

Palacios urged Deleon Guerrero to hold IPI accountable in making right by their employees, their creditors, their vendors, and complete on time Phase 1 of their casino/resort project in Garapan, as was agreed upon in their initial $7-billion investment.

"This investment was a promise to our community, and it ensures our collective success," said Palacios, who is president of the largest business-civic membership association in the CNMI.

Last Oct. 22, the CCC board authorize Deleon Guerrero and deputy commissioner Rafael Demapan as presiding officers to set a hearing date about the five complaints filed by the CCC executive director against IPI before the board for alleged violations.

Citing IPI's recent decision to deposit escrow fees into attorney's accounts to avoid their assets being auctioned in federal court instead of paying their employees, Palacios said this indicates the type of investor or business the SCC cannot condone.

She noted that there have also been suspected instances of humanitarian disaster concerning workers who were allegedly abandoned and not paid for many months, which IPI openly does not resolve.

She said that SCC members, "more than most," understand the difficulties that businesses face while operating in the CNMI. Palacios said their goal is to help both local and outside investors thrive in the CNMI, as their success is the Commonwealth's collective success.

"As businesses operating in the CNMI, we should all be held accountable for our rippling impacts on our community," she said.

Palacios said that, just as IPI's ability to positively contribute to the businesses' success is great, when agreements and laws are not honored, the negative impacts of misconduct are greatly damaging.

So far, the CCC has filed about five complaints with the CCC board against IPI for various alleged violations.

Last October, CCC acting executive director Andrew Yeom, through CCC counsel Michael Ernest, filed a complaint against IPI before the CCC board over IPI's failure to pay the $3.1 million annual regulatory fee that was due last Oct. 1.

Before that, on Sept. 24, Yeom filed a complaint against IPI for allegedly not complying with a CCC order that directed IPI to settle in full any payable or contribution owed to a public or private entity and immediately pay any debt owed to any private entity that is more than 89 days old.

Last Sept. 1, Yeom also filed a complaint against IPI for allegedly failing to comply with the minimum capital requirements of CCC's order, among other issues.

Last August, Yeom filed a complaint against IPI over its failure to pay the $15.5 million annual casino license fee by the deadline last Aug. 12.

Last June, then CCC executive director Charlie Atalig filed a complaint against IPI for allegedly failing to contribute $40 million in Community Benefit Fund money in 2018 and 2019, as required by the Casino License Agreement.

KILLED

From Page 1

sponsive" and had the victim rushed to the hospital, the Commonwealth Health Center.

A separate statement from the Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services said that its personnel were "able to recover the deceased," presumably referring to the car's driver.

Pangelinan said that DPS received a call at around 4:34pm from an eyewitness about a car driving off a cliff in Marpi. He said the vehicle, a black Toyota Tacoma, was found inside a heavily vegetated area just below the cliff-line.

DPS has yet to provide information on the gender of the victim, whether there was a fatality, if there were any other victims, or what caused the incident.

Pangelinan said that investigation remains ongoing and DPS is working on notifying the next of kin.

The DFEMS statement said it received a 911 call at 4:35pm reporting a vehicle had been seen driving off of Suicide Cliff.

Engine-2 and Medic-2 from the Garapan Fire Station and Rescue-1 from the Susupe Fire Station were immediately dispatched to the location, with the first unit arriving on scene at 4:53pm.

"DFEMS and DPS first responders hiked toward the base of the cliff where they found a black Toyota Tacoma that had been engulfed in flames. DFEMS personnel were able to recover the deceased. The case is under investigation by [DPS]," the DFEMS statement added.

At the scene, *Saipan Tribune* saw around 10 DPS vehicles and a couple of DFEMS vehicles at the foot of the cliff and observed dozens of police officers and DFEMS officers searching the jungle below the cliff.

Saipan Tribune also heard police officers requesting body bags but, according to Pangelinan, it is part of police protocol to bring in body bags to similar situations because ambulances do not usually carry any.

A video clip later sent to *Saipan Tribune* showed smoke rising from within the jungle at the base of the cliff, with DFEMS officers searching for the source of the smoke.

Back in 2019, a woman reportedly drove off Banzai Cliff and plunged deep into the ocean below. DPS and DFEMS were unable to find a body but found the car, an SUV, beneath the waters. The incident was the second case of a vehicle driving off Banzai Cliff in two years.

Back in 2017, a local Chinese female by the name Jilian He, 22, sat by the edge of Banzai Cliff in Marpi, got into her rented car, then drove off the cliff.

Police managed to find her body and she was pronounced dead.

BROWNE

From Page 1

as Sept. 24 to make interim payments when money is available.

Given Browne's role in directing payments elsewhere on behalf of IPI, despite having full knowledge of the court's sanctions order—as he stated in his declaration asking for a court-appointed counsel—the court also found Browne in contempt of court.

Fortunately, because IPI finally complied with the court's sanctions of over $93,000 back in Dec. 4, the court does not need to incarcerate Browne as a coercive sanction, Manglona said.

She noted that coercive civil contempt sanctions are intended to coerce compliance with the court's orders in the future.

Because Browne no longer faces possible incarceration, Manglona has also denied his request for a court-appointed counsel.

Manglona found IPI and Browne in contempt because the plaintiffs, through Aaron Halegua and Bruce Berline, "demonstrated by clear and convincing evidence" that both IPI and Browne violated the court's order, and both IPI and Browne concede that they failed to timely comply with the courts order by failing to tender the full sanctions amount, or even any partial payment, to plaintiffs by Oct. 24.

Due to this contempt of court order, plaintiffs are entitled to a compensatory civil contempt award for the actual loss that they suffered, including attorneys' fees, in litigating the order to show cause to secure IPI's compliance.

On Aug. 25, the court ordered IPI to pay the plaintiffs attorneys' fees in the amount of $93,834.25 by Sept. 24 as a sanction due to IPI's repeated failures to abide by the court's discovery orders.

At IPI's request, the court granted it a 30-day extension, ordering that the full amount be paid no later than Oct. 24, and that IPI make interim payments as soon as funds are available. Yet on Oct. 27, plaintiffs filed a notice of noncompliance, informing the court that plaintiffs have not received any payment from IPI for the fee award.

On Nov. 17, plaintiffs moved the court for an order to show cause against IPI.

The court issued its order to show cause on Dec. 2, ordering IPI to explain why the court should not, to name a few, find IPI in contempt, find Browne in contempt, fine and incarcerate Browne, and award the plaintiffs attorneys' fees.

The court set the matter for a hearing on Dec. 10 but two days later, Dec. 4, IPI filed its response to the court's order to show cause, indicating that it paid the sanctions that very day. IPI's counsel, Michael Dotts, filed a declaration certifying that IPI paid $93,834.25 through a check to the plaintiff's local counsel.

In response, plaintiffs argued that IPI and Browne should still be found in contempt for violating the court's order.

POSITIVE

From Page 1

travel screening and confirmed diagnosis through testing upon arrival. A day later, on Dec. 8, two passengers were identified by travel screening and confirmed diagnosis through fifth-day testing. CHCC said these individuals have been safely in quarantine and were moved to the isolation area at Kanoa Resort for monitoring.

Contact tracing has been initiated for the most immediate contacts of the new confirmed cases, including passengers on the same flight. There are now six people who are in isolation at the Kanoa Resort in Susupe.

According to CHCC, the recent four cases were from the U.S. mainland. The CNMI is now going on 111 days with no community transmission.

COVID-19 in Guam

According to the Department of Public Health and Social Services, Guam plans to immunize 5,850 people on the island during the first phase of COVID-19 vaccinations. DPHSS said the first shipment of the Pfizer vaccine could arrive in Guam by mid-December.

Guam expects to receive an initial shipment of 3,900 doses, which will be used to give the first vaccine shot to 3,900 people. The second shipment of 3,900 doses will be used to give those people their second dose, 21 days later, according to DPHSS

The third shipment of 3,900 doses will be divided in half in order to give 1,950 more people both their first and second shots, according to DPHSS, resulting in 5,850 total people being fully vaccinated.

According to the Joint Information Center in Guam, from Dec. 4 to Dec. 6, a total of 60 people tested positive for COVID-19 and were officially reported. Forty-five out of 60 cases were reported last Dec. 5, and 15 cases were identified through contact tracing on Dec. 6. Two cases reported recent travel and were identified in quarantine.

As of Dec. 8, there have been a total of 7,019 reported cases of COVID-19 in Guam, with 113 deaths, 658 cases in active isolation, and 6,248 not in active isolation.

PEARL

From Page 2

story of Doris Miller, a mess attendant on board the USS West Virginia, who carried wounded shipmates to safety and manned a 50-caliber gun returning fire until he ran out of ammunition.

He continued to pull wounded sailors to safety even after an order to abandon ship. The Navy awarded Miller the Navy Cross for his heroism in 1942. Earlier this year, the Navy named its newest aircraft carrier after him.

"Today, a grateful nation reflects upon those who went above and beyond. We honor their service. We remember their sacrifice, and we pledge to continue striving for a better and safer world," Aquilino said.

Altogether more than 2,300 U.S. troops died in the attack.

Warren Upton, a 101-year-old who served on the USS Utah, understood why he could not attend in person this year.

"I think it's too bad, but it's for safety reasons," Upton said from his home in San Jose, California, before Monday's ceremony

Moments before the attack, Upton was getting ready to shave when he felt the first torpedo hit the Utah. No one on board knew what made the ship shake. Then, the second torpedo hit and the ship began to list and capsize.

Upton swam ashore to Ford Island, where he jumped in a trench to avoid Japanese plans strafing the area. He stayed for about 30 minutes until a truck came and took him to safety.

Utpon said he doesn't mind talking about that day. What upsets him more is that he lost shipmates over the years. He said only three crew members of the Utah are still alive, including himself.

SEARCH

From Page 3

their applications, Cepeda said.

Because it will take another month for the initial interview, then the BOR will go through its own process with the second interview, Cepeda said that NMC can expect a new president by the first quarter of 2021.

Applicants who are interested can check NMC's home page, marianas.edu, for more information.

The last NMC president was a previous president. Dr. Carmen Fernandez, who was rehired in October 2016 but resigned in August 2018. Before her, Dr. Sharon Hart was with the college for nearly five years. She resigned in June 2016.

Bill hikes CNMI's share of any money recovered from IPI debtors since '16

The Senate passed on first and final reading last week a bill that will increase the percentage of recovery for the CNMI government and the Office of the Attorney General for prosecuting gamblers who owe casino operator Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC.

Introduced by Senate President Victor B. Hocog (R-Rota) and some other senators, all eight senators present at the session last Tuesday voted to pass Senate Bill 21-75. They were Sens.Teresita A. Santos (Ind-Rota), Paul A. Manglona (D-Rota), Sixto K. Igisomar (R-Saipan), Vinnie F. Sablan (Ind-Saipan), Jude U. Hofschneider (R-Tinian), Francisco M. Borja (R-Tinian), and Francisco Q. Cruz (R-Tinian). Sen. Justo S. Quitugua (R-Saipan) was excused from the session.

The bill increases the percentage of recovery, for the CNMI government and OAG for pursuing criminal action against an IPI debtor for misuse of financial instruments, from 10% under the current law to 15% of the principal debt plus interest and liquidated damages, if any, recovered as restitution or paid as part of a pre-trial disposition or paid by the alleged perpetrator to IPI.

Of the 15% due the Commonwealth, 10% (up from 5% under the current law) shall be paid to the general fund and 5% shall be retained by the OAG for use solely for the recruitment and training of its professional staff and the acquisition of office equipment and supplies.

The bill will apply retroactively to the year 2016 and moving forward.

Hocog explained that the bill amends Public Law 20-85, which allows the Attorney General to go after people that owe the casino operator, to collect debts that remain unpaid. Hocog said the bill applies to debts owed since 2016, for players that have not paid IPI with what they lost during their games.

With this bill, Hocog said, a player that owns investment or businesses on U.S. soil would be subject to the OAG filing a lien against the company for possible collection for IPI, which will also benefit the Commonwealth government.

Hocog said the current law provides a total of 10% recovery: 5% to the OAG and 5% to the Commonwealth general fund.

"This amendment going back [to 2016] will increase the ratio of the collection fee that the Commonwealth will be getting with an additional 5%, for a total of 10%," he said.

The OAG, Hocog said, will still get a 5% share. "That's the only amendment, to [make] the collection process [retroactive] to 2016 and not only [from] 2019 moving forward," he said.

With this amendment, the Senate president said, the company or the casino operator offered an additional 5% to the Commonwealth, totaling 10%. Plus the 5% going to the OAG, this brings to 15% the CNMI's share of whatever is collected from those that owe the casino.

Without this amendment to the law, Hocog said the OAG cannot prosecute those gamblers that have outstanding debts with IPI that date back to 2016 because the present law only authorizes prosecution from 2019 moving forward.

"That's the purpose of this amendment. To go back as far as 2016," he added.

Hocog said this will benefit the Commonwealth as well as the OAG for going after these people that still owe IPI.

In a separate interview, Igisomar said that IPI experienced cases where some gamblers passed bad checks from 2016 to 2019 involving substantial amounts of money. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
Office of the Executive Director

REQUEST FOR A&E SERVICES
CUC-RAES-21-012

Engineering Consulting Services for CUC's Integrated Solar Photovoltaic Energy and Battery Storage Systems

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed RAES Proposals from qualified firms for engineering consultant services for CUC's solar photovoltaic and renewable energy systems in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The award of this project is under the Department of the Interior Office of Insular Affairs.

The RAES package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $100.00 for one RAES package set.

One (1) original and five (5) hard copies of the AES Proposal marked *"CUC-RAES-21-012, Engineering Consulting Services for CUC's Integrated Solar Photovoltaic Energy and Battery Storage Systems"*, to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than December 30, 2020 at 10:00 a.m. (ChST)**. Late submissions and conditional offers will not be considered.

Discussions may be conducted with responsible proposers who submit RAES Proposal determined to be reasonably susceptible of being selected for award for the purpose of clarification and to ensure full understanding of and responsiveness to solicitation requirements. All proposers shall be accorded fair and equal treatment with respect to any opportunity for discussion. During discussions, there will be no disclosure of any information derived from the RAES Proposal submitted by competing proposers.

All proposers are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the proposer due to lack of information or understanding of the RAES requirements in the course of proposer's preparation of the RAES under the contract. The RAES does not commit CUC to award a contract, to pay any cost incurred in the preparation of the RAES under this request, or to procure or contract for services. Proposers are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This RAES and the ensuing contract shall be executed as per the CUC Procurement Regulations.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered prospective proposers and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on December 15, 2020** to Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Anne Crockett, CUC Senior Electrical Engineer via email address anne.crocket@cucgov.org and Christie L. Sablan, Administrative Technician Senior, via email christie.sablan@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all RAES Proposals for any reason and to waive any defects in said RAES, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All RAES Proposals shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY BOYER SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS (CNMI)
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC LANDS (DPL)

Tel.: (670) 234-3751 • Website: www.dpl.gov.mp • Email: dpl@dpl.gov.mp

NOTICE OF PROPOSED LEASE OF PUBLIC LAND

In accordance with Section 106 (b) of Public Law 15-2, the Department of Public Lands hereby gives notice of its intent to lease certain public land in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Any interested parties of the general public may submit comments, data, views, or arguments of alternative proposals for the lease of the public land. As further provided by Public Law 15-2, the following pertinent information is required to be published.

i. The proposed lease of public land is described as Lot 057 E 18, Lot 057 E 15 and Lot 057 E 29, containing a total area of approximately 6,603 square meters, more or less, situated in Lower Base, Saipan. Copies of the location of the parcels are available at the Department of Public Lands and website www.dpl.gov.mp for inspection.

ii. The prospective lessee is A & M Corporation. The list of officers for A & M Corporation are Mrs. Maria S. Palacios, as President, and Mr. Arnold I. Palacios, as Secretary/ Treasurer.

iii. The proposed lease is compliant with DPL regulations and was negotiated by the officers and directors of A & M Corporation, mainly Mrs. Maria S. Palacios.

iv. The lessee shall use the premises solely for the purpose of a operating a Warehouse, Maintenance, Repair Shop, Carpentry Shop, Management Office and other related activities.

The term of the proposed lease agreement is 25 years.

The proposed annual rental during the term of each lease agreement is based on a percentage of the appraised fair market value of the property plus the applicable percentage of Business Gross Receipts in DPL's regulation.

v. A copy of the proposed lease agreement may be obtained at the office of the Department of Public Lands, located on the 2nd floor of the Joeten Dandan Commercial Building in Dandan, Saipan; 1st floor of the De'Ana Commercial Building, Songsong Village, Rota; or the 1st floor of PM Building, Tinian. A copy will also be available online at www.dpl.gov.mp

vi. The Department of Public Lands has received no alternative proposals to lease the subject public land in Lower Base, Saipan.

vii. The Secretary of the Department of Public Lands shall accept written comments, views, arguments or alternative proposals from interested parties on or before December 11, 2020 at the Department of Public Lands offices located in Saipan, Rota or Tinian.

NUTISIA PUT I MAPROPONI NA ATKILON TANU' PUPBLIKU

Sigun gi Seksiona 106 (b) gi Lai Pupliku 15-2, i Dipattamentun Tanu' Pupbliku ha nå'inutisia guini put I intension ñani para u nama'atkila palu na tanu' pupbliku giya Saipan, Commonwealth gi Sangkattan na Islas Marianas Siha. I manintiresão na petsona siha gi halum pupbliku henerål siña muna'na'halum upiñon, imfotmasion, pat testimoñiun kinentra gi tinahguin prinoponi siha para I atkilon tanu' pupbliku. Kumu más mo'na mapribeniyini Lai Pupbliku 15-2, I sigienti na pettanesi na imfotmasion ni madimånda ni para u mapupblika.

i. I maproponi na atkilon tanu' pupbliku madiskribi komu Lot 057 E 18, Lot 057 E 15 yan Lot 057 E 29, ni ha kunsisisti i åriagikå si guaha 6,603 square meters, más pat menus, ni gaigi gi Lower Base, iya Saipan. I kopian i pumalu managuaha gi Dipåttamentun Tanu' Pupbliku yan gi website www.dpl.gov.mp para rinikono simientu.

ii. The prospective lessee i A & M Corporation. I listan ufisiåt siha para i A & M Corporation si Siñora Maria S. Palacios, komu Presidenti, yan si Siñot Arnold I. Palacios, komu Sekritåriu/Tresureru.

iii. I maproponi na atkilon"compliant" yan i regulasion DPL yan manigosiu ni ufisiåt yan direktot nu i A & M Corporation, mayot menti si Siñora Maria S. Palacios.

iv. I lessee debina u usa i lugåt para atyu ha' na rason "operating" i "Warehouse, Maintenance, Repair Shop, Carpentry Shop, Management Office" yan ottru manasosiåt na rason.

I tema nu i maproponi na kuntrå tanat kilon sabenti singku (25) åñus na tiempu.

I maproponi na atkilon gikada' såkkan gi durântin i temani kontrå tanat kilon mapegagi pusientus nu ibâlin"appraised fair market" i propiedåt yan i aplikåblina pusientusnu Risibun Hina'halum Bisnis gi halum regulasion i DPL.

v. I kopian i maproponina kuntrå tanak kilon siña machuli' gi ufisinan Dipåttamentun Tanu' Pupbliku, ni gaigi gi Sigundu (2nd) na bibiendan I JoetenDandan Commercial Building iya Dandan, Saipan, giprimet (1st) na bibiendani De'Ana Commercial Building, iyaSongsongnasengsong, Luta; pat giprimet (1st) nabibiendan I PM Building, giya Tini'an. I kopia mana guaha lokkui' gi online gi www.dpl.gov.mp

vi. I Dipattamentun Tanu' Pupbliku tåya' ha risibi tinahguin propositu siha para u ma' atkila I masuhetu na tanu' pupbliku gi Lower Base, Saipan.

vii. I Sekritårian Dipattamentun Tanu' Pupbliku debina u aksepta tinigi' upiñon, imfotmasion, testimoniun kinentra pat tinahguin priniponi ginin I manintirisão na pattida siha gi pat åntis di Disembre 11, 2020 giufisinan Dipattamentun Tanu' Pupbliku siha ni gaigi giya Saipan, Luta pat Tinian.

ARONGORONGOL TOULAP REEL POMMWOL ATKKILÓÓNOL FALUWEER TOULAP

Sángi Tálil 106 (b) reel Alléghúl Toulap 15-2, Bwulasiyol Ammwelil Faluweer Toulap e attotoowow arongorong reel igha re mángemángil rebwe atkkilaay akkááw faluweer toulap llól Seipél, Commonwealth Téél Falúw kka Efáng llól Marianas. Schóókka re mwuschel isiisilong kkapas, data, views, ngáre angiingi reel pommwol atkkilóónol faluweer toulap. Eyoor sángi Alléghúl Toulap 15-2, arongorong ikka e amwirimwiritiw ebw eakkatééwow.

i. Pommwol atkkilóónol faluweer toulap e bwáálóbwe Lot 057 E 18, Lot 057 E 15 me Lot 057 E 29, e lo bwe 6,603 reel square meters, elapeló ngáre eghus, iye e lo Lower Base, Seipél. Pappidil Falúw yeel eyoor me Bwulasiyol Ammwelil Faluweer Toulap me bwalwóól website me www.dpl.gov.mp ngáre u mwuschel amwuri.

ii. Pommwol schóól atkkilóón nge A & M Corporation. List-al officers ngáli A & M Corporation nge Mrs. Maria S. Palacios, bwe President, me Mr. Arnold I. Palacios, bwe Sekkretóóriyo/ Treasurer.

iii. Pommwol atkkilóón nge e angúúngú fengál me mwóghutughutúl DPL me e abwungubwung sángi officers me directors-il A & M Corporation, spesiatmente Mrs. Maria S. Palacios.

iv. Schóól atkkilóón ebwe yááyá falúw ngáli mwóghutughutúl "Warehouse", "Maintenance", "Repair Shop", "Carpentry Shop", "Management Office" me akkááw mwóghutughutikka e bwal schuulong.

Pommwol abwungubwungúl atkkilóón nge ruweigh me limoow ráágh.

Pommwol atkkilóónol ghal ráágh ngáligh aleew abwungu bwungúlat kkilóónnge e lo reel percentage-il "appraised fair market value" reel falúwfengál me "applicable percentage" reel "Business Gross Receipts" llól mwóghutughutúl DPL.

v. Pappidil pommwol abwungubwungúl atkkilóón emmwel ubwe bweibwogh mereel Bwulasiyol Ammwelil Faluweer toulap, iye e lo 2nd floor reel Joeten Dandan Commercial Building llól Dandan, Seipél; 1st floor reel De'Ana Commercial Building, Apilómwol Songsong, Luuta' ngáre 1st floor reel PM Building, Tchiliyól. Ebwalyoor pappidil mille online me www.dpl.gov.mp

vi. Bwulasiyol Ammwelil Faluweer Toulap rese bweibwogh pommw iye e siiweli falúw iye re apasa me Lower Base, Seipél.

vii. Sekkretóóriyal Bwulasiyol Ammwelil Faluweer Toulap emmweli lbweibwogh ischil mángemáng, views, angii ngáre pommwiye re siiweli sángi schóókka re mwuschel wóól ngáremmwalil Disembre 11, 2020 me Bwulasiyol Ammwelil Faluweer Toulap me Seipél, Luuta, ngáre Tchiliyól.

5 confirmed, 3 probable leptospirosis cases in Guam

The Department of Public Health and Social Services in Guam has received reports of five confirmed and three probable leptospirosis cases in the past seven weeks.

Infection was recently confirmed in three cases in November: one confirmed case, along with three probable cases, all of whom were swimming in the Ylig River at the Manenggon Memorial on Veterans Day.

For the other two confirmed cases in November, one has no additional information available and the other case involved working at an unspecified outdoor jobsite.

Infection was also recently confirmed from tests conducted off-island, in two separate U.S. Naval Hospital cases in mid-October: one active duty military member who had been hiking at San Carlos Falls on Nimitz Hill, and a military dependent whose exposure is unknown.

Leptospirosis is a zoonotic infection, which may be fatal, that is transmitted from animals to humans by infected urine through the environment. Infection can occur through breaks in the skin or through the mucous membranes of the eyes, nose or mouth. The wide range of leptospirosis symptoms (high fever, headache, chills, muscle aches, vomiting, jaundice, red eyes, abdominal pain, diarrhea and rash) and their poor specificity can be mistaken for other diseases (i.e. dengue fever or influenza).

Without treatment, the disease can lead to serious complications (e.g. kidney and liver failure) and even death. It is therefore crucial that people who feel sick with a fever and think they have the disease quickly consult a doctor. Early antibiotic treatment is a major determinant of rapid recovery and prevents most of the severe complications and fatalities.

Heavy and torrential rainfall caused by tropical storms is an important trigger of leptospirosis in endemic settings like Guam and other tropical islands. Epidemiological evidence suggests that the contamination occurs at the time of heavy rain flooding events or very shortly after, thus leptospirosis cases will seek medical care one to three weeks after storms. Since Guam has had a lot of rain and stormy weather recently, this is the likely reason why DPHSS is seeing numerous confirmed and probable leptospirosis cases. Historical information shows leptospirosis infection in Guam occurs mainly in people who have been hiking and/or swimming in streams and rivers in the southern part of the island.

The risk of acquiring leptospirosis can be greatly reduced by not swimming or wading in water that might be contaminated with animal urine; thus, the public may wish to refrain from such activities, particularly after a heavy rainfall, and by eliminating contact with potentially infected animals. Protective clothing or footwear should be worn by those exposed to contaminated water or soil because of their job or recreational activities.

For more information from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, see https://www.cdc.gov/leptospirosis/index.html and https://www.cdc.gov/leptospirosis/resources/leptospirosis-fact-sheet.html.

To report leptospirosis cases, contact Dr. Ann Pobutsky, the Territorial Epidemiologist, at (671) 888-9276 or ann.pobutsky@dphss.guam.gov. ***(PR)***

24 GMS spellers to compete in school spelling championship

Twenty-four students topped the 2021 Scripps classroom spelling bee competition at Green Meadow School, paving their way for the school championship in January 2021.

With this year's coronavirus pandemic and the restrictions that came with school openings, a number of extracurricular activities had been cancelled but, thanks to Scripps Spelling Bee, it created a solution by allowing either virtual or in-person competition this school year.

Each class, from first to eighth grade, conducted an oral spelling bee, with some students in class and others online, and every class came up with the Top 3 winners. So far, this was the first major school competition held by GMS since the school lockdown in March 2020. The top 24 students are now preparing for the school championship to be held next year.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Twenty-four students topped the 2021 Scripps classroom spelling bee competition at Green Meadow School, paving their way for the school championship in January 2021.

GMS school principal Milagros Songcuan did not hesitate to enroll in this year's Scripps Spelling Bee because she is convinced that enrolling in this kind of program will help GMS students widen their vocabulary and enhance their skills in spelling competition.

The 2021 Scripps Classroom Spelling Bee winners are:

1st Grade: Roanne DC Palma (first place); Jaydn T. Palacios (second place); and John Raphael Aguon (third place)

2nd Grade: Lara Ysabelle Zapanta (first place), Albert Miguel Santos (second place), Angelene Agdoro (third place)

3rd Grade: Jamie Andrea Palabay (first place), Nicole Tongonan (second place), Miel Jewel Mabaquiao (third place)

4th Grade: Thaddeus Tolentino (first place), Miguel Aumentado (second place), Dorsan James Santod (third place)

5th Grade: Isabella Marie Mallari (first place), Nelisa Nicole Acaba (second place), Jericho Honolan (third place)

6th Grade: Tristan Yanto (first place), Louise Manansala (second place), Paula Angela Bernardo (third place)

7th Grade: John Edsel Hinolan (first place), Ezra Kirsten Alfred (second place), John Raven Cruz (third place)

8th Grade: Chealzka Navarro (first place), Solana Arro Hunter (second place), Buien Joseph Din (third place) ***(PR)***

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY
JC Marketing Inc. (Saipan)

a Distribution Company, is looking for
FIELD SALES REPRESENTATIVE
Candidates must be:
Highschool Graduate
Have at least 2 years of Field Sales experience

Interested individuals can submit resume via email to jcme@jcmarketinginc.com or fax to 235-6336

CNMI SCHOLARSHIP BOARD

Caller Box 10007, Saipan MP 96950 | Telephone No. (670) 664-4750

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Pursuant to 1 CMC § 9910, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Scholarship Board of Directors is hereby giving notice that it will hold its 1st regular board meeting on Friday, December 11, 2020 at 1:30pm on Saipan. The meeting will be held at the CNMI Scholarship Office Conference Room.

AGENDA

I. Meeting Call to Order
II. Determination of Quorum
III. Review and Adoption of Agenda
IV. Review and Adoption of Minutes
V. Administrators' Updates
VI. Executive Session
VII. New Business
  a. Hiring of Administrator
VIII. Announcements & Next Meeting
IX. Adjournment

/s/ Geralyn C. Dela Cruz, Chairwoman

CNMI DIVISION OF PROCUREMENT & SUPPLY
CNMI GOVERNMENT

INVITATION TO BID
RFP NO.: ITB21-COTA/FTA-020

SUBMISSION DATE: DECEMBER 28, 2020 TIME: 10:30 A.M.

"PURCHASE AND DELIVERY OF EIGHT (8) MEDIUM-DUTY LOW FLOOR 2020 OR NEWER ADA ACCESIBLE TRANSIT BUSES FOR THE COMMONWEALTH OFFICE OF TRANSITY AUTHORITY"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES, LOCATED AT THE FORMER EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OFFICE, ASENCION DRIVE, BUILDING NO. 1301, CAPITOL HILL, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORING HOURS.

****FOR YOUR SAFETY & OURS: ALL INTERESTED INDIVIDUALS ARE REQUIRED TO USE A FACE MASK & ARE REQUIRED TO REGISTER UPON ENTRY****

QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS ITB CAN BE MADE IN WRITING TO MS. ALFREDA P. CAMACHO, SA FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION, VIA E-MAIL TO alfreda.camacho@gov.mp **NO LATER THAN THE CLOSE OF BUSINESS, DECEMBER 11, 2020**. QUESTIONS SUBMITTED AFTER THE GIVEN DEADLINE WILL NOT BE ENTERTAINED.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3.-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ ALFREDA P. CAMACHO
SA, PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

/S/ FRANCISCO AGUON
ACTING DIRECTOR, P&S

CNMI DIVISION OF PROCUREMENT & SUPPLY
CNMI GOVERNMENT

REQUEST FOR PROPSAL
RFP NO.: RFP21-OGM-019

SUBMISSION DATE: DECEMBER 28, 2020 TIME: 9:30 A.M.

"2020 2MW UTILITY SCALE GRID CONNECTED ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEM FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR THE ISLAND OF ROTA. A PROJECT UNDER THE OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR, OFFICE OF GRANTS MANAGEMENT & STATE CLEARINGHOUSE"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES, LOCATED AT THE FORMER EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OFFICE, ASENCION DRIVE, BUILDING NO. 1301, CAPITOL HILL, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORING HOURS.

****FOR YOUR SAFETY & OURS: ALL INTERESTED INDIVIDUALS ARE REQUIRED TO USE A FACE MASK & ARE REQUIRED TO REGISTER UPON ENTRY****

PRE-PROSAL MEETING WILL BE HELD AT THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE, CAPITOL HILL – SAIPAN ON **DECEMBER 11, 2020 AT 10:00 A.M., LOCAL TIME**. ALL PARTICIPANTS/ATTENDEES ARE REQUIRED TO USE A FACE MASK AND EXERCISE SOCIAL DISTANCING FOR THE DURATION OF THE MEETING.

QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS RFP MUST BE SUBMITTED IN WRITING TO **MR. EPIPHANIO E. CABRERA, JR., ADMINISTRATOR**, VIA E-MAIL TO epi.cabrera@gov.mp **NO LATER THAN THE CLOSE OF BUSINESS, DECEMBER 14, 2020.**

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ EPIPHANIO E. CABRERA, JR.
ADMINISTRATOR, OGM

/S/ FRANCISCO C. AGUON
ACTING DIRECTOR, P&S

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Free health fair on Dec. 13

The Association of Lions Clubs International through its home club, Saipan Pacific Lions Club District 204 Region 2, will hold its Health Fair on Dec. 13, 2020, from 8am to 12pm at the Joeten Daidai Hall adjacent to the Mt. Carmel Cathedral.

Among the services that will be made available to everyone are blood pressure testing; sugar/glucose testing; general health awareness that will improve and maintain a healthy life; one-on-one talk on life coaching on intentional wellness and growth with Kamerin Pereira, certified life coach, for free consultation; free session on diabetic education, and general health awareness; and free reading eyeglass.

Facemasks will be required. Social distancing and other safety measures and health protocol imposed by the COVID-19 Task Force would be implemented. ***(PR)***

SINMI sets monthly lunch meeting

The Northern Mariana Islands Chapter of Soroptimist International will hold its monthly luncheon meeting on Thursday, Dec. 10, at noon at the Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan World Café buffet. The cost of the luncheon is $17. Join us to help continue our work for the "Best for Women" in the CNMI! ***(PR)***

Public warned of rip currents until Thursday

The high rip current risk remains in effect through late Thursday night on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota.

Based on the information received from the National Weather Service in Tiyan, Guam, and compiled at the CNMI Emergency Operations Center State Warning Point, dangerous rip currents are present in east-facing reefs of the Marianas until Thursday night.

Rip currents can sweep even the best swimmers away from shore into deeper water. Residents are advised to avoid venturing out near reef lines facing east. Swim near a lifeguard. If caught in a rip current, relax and float. Don`t swim against the current. If able, swim in a direction following the shoreline. If unable to escape, face the shore and call or wave for help. ***(PR)***

153 Restaurant signs on as NMC ProaPerks Partner

153 Restaurant is the latest company to sign on as a Northern Marianas College ProaPerks Partner, joining many other businesses and organizations that provide exclusive discounts and benefits for NMC students, employees, and alumni.

All card-carrying members of the NMC ProaPerks program can now get 10% off items on the regular menu of 153 Restaurant.

NMC is in the introductory phase of rolling out the ProaPerks to alumni, students, and employees. For more information, visit marianas.edu/proaperks.

Companies and other interested organizations who would like to become part of the ProaPerks program and take advantage of the buying power of thousands of individuals that include Northern Marianas College alumni, students, and employees, can find more information by emailing proaperks@marianas.edu. ***(PR)***

153 Restaurant is now a proud NMC ProaPerks partner. All card-carrying members of the ProaPerks program can now get 10% off items on the regular menu.

NMC

CNMI Scholarship application deadline set

Northern Marianas College is reminding new and ongoing students that the application deadline for CNMI Scholarship is Dec. 15, 2020. The spring semester for NMC begins with the first day of classes on Jan. 19, 2021, so students are advised to register for classes early.

The available financial aid sources for the upcoming spring semester are:

Saipan Higher Education Financial Assistance (SHEFA)

Supporting Documents Deadline: Mar. 1, 2021

Email: saipanshefa@gmail.com | Phone: (670) 235-5995

Website: saipanshefa.net

CNMI Scholarship

Application Deadline: Dec. 15, 2020

Supporting Documents Deadline: Feb. 28, 2021

Email: awards@cnmischolarship.net | Phone: (670) 664-4750

Website: cnmischolarship.net

Pell Grant (Free Application for Federal Student Aid or FAFSA)

Students who have already filled out a 2020-2021 FAFSA do not need to apply again. However, individuals who have not filled up the FAFSA should apply before the spring term begins. A qualified student can receive up to $3,173 in Pell grants for the spring 2021 semester.

Those who need assistance in applying for financial aid can contact any of NMC's financial aid staff:

Daisy Manglona-Propst
Director, Financial Aid
Tel: 237-6792
daisy.propst@marianas.edu

Verna Y. Deleon Guerrero
Financial aid Ccounselor
Tel: 237-6793
verna.dlguerrero@marianas.edu

Colleen R. Villagomez
Financial aid specialist
Tel: 237-6794
colleen.villagomez@marianas.edu

Roy Luie A. Alegre
Financial aid specialist
Tel: 237-6791
roy.alegre@marianas.edu

For more information about registering for classes for the upcoming spring 2021 semester or to apply for admission, contact the NMC Office of Admissions and Records at 237-6768/6769/6771 or visit www.marianas.edu. ***(PR)***

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
Office of the Executive Director

INVITATION FOR BIDS

CUC-IFB-21-001

ROTA WATER SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS PHASE- 2 PROJECT REPLACEMENT OF FLOW METER AND PRESSURE RELEASE VALVE (W17-053)

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the Construction of Rota Water System Improvements Phase 2 Project in Rota, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The project consists, in general removal and installation of gate valve assembly, PRV, flow meter, strainer, pressure gauge and other related work. The work shall be done in accordance with the Project Plans and Specifications and without disruption to the daily operation of the water system.

This project is funded by a grant from the United States of Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). The award of this project is contingent upon receipt of the approval for project award from USEPA.

CUC requires the Project to be completed in **120 calendar days** from date of award of contract.

Prospective Bidders for this IFB must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $200.00 (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

A Mandatory Pre-Bid Conference followed by a Site Visit is scheduled on **December 3, 2020 at 10:00 AM (ChST)** at the CUC Rota Directors Office, Sinapalo, Rota.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked **"CUC-IFB-21-001, Rota Water System Improvements Phase 2 Project Replacement of Flow Meter and Pressure Release Valve"**, to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on December 22, 2020**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered. Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement the form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. **Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.**

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

A *Bid Guarantee* of fifteen (15%) percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The bid guarantee may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States, Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. A *Payment Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent and a *Performance Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). **Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.**

All bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

All questions or request for clarification regarding this project must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on December 7, 2020** to Mr. Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email – manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Mr. Edgar Tuazon, CUC Water/Wastewater Engineer via email edgar.tuazon@cucgov.org and Ms. Marcela Tenorio, Purchasing Technician Senior via email - marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids and waive any imperfection in the bid proposal in the best interest of the government. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY BOYER SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
Office of the Executive Director

INVITATION FOR BIDS

CUC-IFB-21-011

ISLEY BOOSTER II TRANSMISSION AND BOOSTER PUMP UPGRADE

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the Construction of Isley Booster II Transmission and Booster Pump Upgrade in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The project consists of upgrading of existing Isley Booster II Pump Station (IB-2); installation of new transmission line to the existing Dandan tank; rehabilitation of existing IB-2 concrete sump tank, yard piping, aboveground flowmeter and valve station with concrete pad, and all other appurtenances at the IB-2 site; construction of a new chlorine and electrical building; installation of new booster pump system (triplex system); construction of new perimeter security fencing and facility lighting; and restoration of existing asphalt concrete road. The work shall be done in accordance with the Project Plans and Specifications and without disruption to the daily operation of the water system.

This project is funded by a grant from the United States of Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). The award of this project is contingent upon receipt of approval for project award from USEPA.

CUC requires the Project to be completed in **300 calendar days** from date of award of contract.

Prospective Bidders for this IFB must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $200.00 (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by site visits will be held on **December 15, 2020 at 10:00 AM (ChST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No.17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies of the bid must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked **"CUC-IFB-21-011, Isley Booster II Transmission and Booster Pump Upgrade** to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on January 05, 2021**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before due date and time or post-marked before due date and time.

Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms.

Bidders may supplement this form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. **Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.**

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

A Bid Guarantee of not less than fifteen (15%) of the total bid price shall accompany the bids. The security deposit may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety or other surety acceptable to the Attorney General.

A Payment Bond of one hundred (100%) percent and a Performance Bond of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety or other surety acceptable to the Attorney General.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). *Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.*

All bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

All questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from registered Proponents and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 a.m. (ChST) on December 21, 2020** to Mr. Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email – manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Mr. Edgar Tuazon, CUC Water/Wastewater Engineer via email edgar.tuazon@cucgov.org and Ms. Marcela Tenorio, Administrative Technician Senior via email - marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids and waive any non-material imperfection in the bid proposal in the best interest of the government. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Officer

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
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THE CHRISTMAS STORY

EDITORIAL

Biden must not rush to nuclear diplomacy with Iran

After the killing of Iran's top nuclear scientist last week, President-elect Joe Biden is coming under renewed pressure to quickly resume negotiations with the regime. He should slow down and proceed with caution.

Biden has long since telegraphed his desire to resuscitate the nuclear deal that Iran agreed to with the U.S. and other world powers in 2015. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, as it was known, was designed to pause Tehran's nuclear-development program well short of the weaponization stage. Since President Donald Trump's decision to unilaterally withdraw the U.S. from the agreement in 2018, Tehran has accelerated its enrichment of uranium and built up its stockpile to alarming levels. Now the regime is threatening to end international nuclear inspections unless Biden lifts key sanctions within weeks of taking office.

Biden would like to turn the clock back, and can expect a chorus of approval from the other signatories of the deal if he does. The European Union, along with China and Russia, would like him to flourish his executive pen and quickly bring the U.S. back into the agreement: That would allow them to sell everything from passenger jets and sedans to missiles and tanks to the theocrats in Tehran.

At the other end of the spectrum, Israel and many of Iran's Arab neighbors are signaling their anxiety—witness Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's recent secret visit to Saudi Arabia—that Biden will repeat the mistakes of President Barack Obama and brush aside the concerns of countries that are most menaced by the regime and its proxies. They view the agreement as a license for Iran to deploy all non-nuclear means in its pursuit of regional hegemony. They won't be reassured by Biden's decision to name top Obama-era officials Antony Blinken and Jake Sullivan, both champions of the nuclear deal, as his secretary of state and national security adviser.

Biden's own druthers are to encourage Iran to end enrichment and reduce its stockpile to 2017 levels, which would pave the way for the U.S. to return to the deal and drop the sanctions introduced by Trump. Once such a "compliance for compliance" scenario is achieved, Biden hopes to open new negotiations over Iran's other dangerous activities, including its missile development and use of proxy militias to destabilize the region.

Resuming dialogue would no doubt be politically expedient for Biden. But he should be mindful that the trick to diplomacy is often in the timing. There's little purpose to opening negotiations before next summer, when Iran's quadrennial simulacrum of elections produce a new president. Although Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei will always be the regime's real decision-maker, it makes sense to wait for him to formally anoint Hassan Rouhani's successor before sending feelers to Tehran.

See BIDEN on Next Page

Public health nurse: Here's why I trust the COVID vaccines

By JENNA MERMER
THE BALTIMORE SUN

There are currently three COVID-19 vaccines awaiting approval by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. FDA approval will trigger millions of vaccine doses to be distributed across the U.S. and administered to the first "tier" of recipients, likely consisting of health care workers and congregant living residents.

What was only a thought experiment this summer—"would I be willing to get a COVID vaccine developed in the time frame of less than a year?"—has become a question I answered in reality last week as my health department began planning its tier one vaccine supply request, of which I am a part since I am a public health nurse there. I have had my own concerns related to the vaccine, which I have reconciled for myself; my hope is that sharing my thought process may help you as well.

First, I admit that I do not fully understand the mRNA vaccine—but there are plenty of things about science and medicine that I don't fully understand, yet accept as fact. Since I am not an immunologist or vaccine expert, I have to trust that the community of professionals has been as honest and thorough in their assessments of these vaccines as they have been with all other vaccines before them. The electrical wiring in my house is best tended to by an electrician; I try to be an informed electricity consumer, but I mostly leave it up to the professionals. I choose the same approach here.

(Note: For those not comfortable with an mRNA vaccine, the AstraZeneca vaccine is another option, though its trials are currently showing 70-90% efficacy as opposed to the mRNA vaccine's 95%.)

Second: I, too, have concerns about long-term vaccine safety. Truly, only time can tell about any long-lasting effects of the vaccine, but we must first survive the pandemic in order to be affected by long-lasting effects—survival that is made more likely by receiving the vaccine. More than a quarter-million people have died in the U.S. from COVID-19, and the University of Washington Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation projects that number to nearly double over the next four months. The more time we spend on research and development and getting comfortable with the idea of the vaccine, the more people who will get sick and possibly die.

These vaccines have been developed quickly as a result of safety trials, efficacy trials, manufacturing and distribution planning happening concurrently rather than sequentially as they have in the past. No part of the process has been skipped—instead, it is all being done at the same time and must all be completed satisfactorily before any vaccine is approved by the FDA and offered to the general public. This saved time is a gift, and I accept it gladly.

Third, some of my colleagues are concerned about being treated as "guinea pigs." I am happy to report that my friends and colleagues who participated in the clinical trials took that role on for us and have reported only minor complaints of the flu-like symptoms common following vaccine receipt. No amount of tweaking will make any vaccine 100% safe for every person, but the side effects appear minor and definitely not as big or bad as the virus' effects on our bodies and communities.

I know that my opinion as a white woman may be of little comfort to communities of color that historically have been exploited in medical research. I am buoyed by the fact that the trials have enrolled a proportion of Latinx individuals exceeding their proportion of the U.S. population and that Moderna fell just 3% short of Black Americans' proportion of the U.S. population. I am also heartened by the Black Coalition Against COVID-19's encouragement of Black Americans to get the COVID vaccine, which was signed by the presidents of four HBCU Colleges of Medicine, the National Medical Association and the National Black Nurses Association.

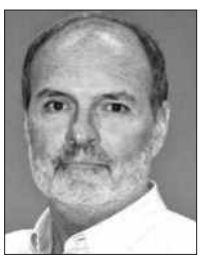
I, and many of my friends, family and colleagues have lingering concerns, including the need for transparent data regarding safety, children and pregnant persons, as well as more experts expressing faith in the vaccine's safety and efficacy, and difference between these trials and historical trials. Personally, my biggest fear is that the vaccine will not be as effective under real-life circumstances as it has been in the controlled setting of a clinical trial—but if that is the worst-case scenario, then I am OK with giving it a shot.

Jenna Mermer is a public health nurse with the Howard County Health Department in Maryland. The opinions expressed here are her own, and unaffiliated with her employer. Email: jenna.mermer@gmail.com.

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

The civil war that fizzled out

By JOHN M. CRISP
Tribune News Service



John M. Crisp, an op-ed columnist for Tribune News Service*, lives in Georgetown, Texas, and can be reached at jcrispcolumns@gmail.com.*

An internet search of the term "second civil war" yields a sobering reminder of how much talk, loose and earnest, there has been in the last year about the possibility of Americans taking up arms against each other.

Sometimes references to civil war were expressions of fantasies by fringe groups such as the "boogaloo boys," a loosely organized, anti-government "militia" that dreams of inciting a conflict that would provide a purpose for their lives and a validation of their fetishes for AR-15s.

Other times elected politicians gave us a glimpse into their hearts. Last year Iowa congressman Steve King posted on Facebook an imaginative map of the red and blue states duking it out under this caption: "Folks keep talking about another civil war. One side has about 8 trillion bullets, while the other side doesn't know which bathroom to use."

King, never known for his restraint or good judgment, is the House of Representatives' version of a "boogaloo boy." But responsible thinkers and writers have expressed their concerns, as well. In September, New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman said this to CNN's Anderson Cooper: "You know, I began my career as a journalist covering Lebanon's second civil war in its history, and I'm terrified to find myself ending my career as a journalist covering America's potential second civil war in its history."

The context for this worrisome talk was a country in a very bad mood. Ordinary partisan divides have been stoked by inflammatory and divisive tweets from the White House for four years. In May George Floyd was publicly murdered by a police officer, and protestors took to the streets all across the nation. The inevitable looters and arsonists made things look more volatile than they really were. The apparent disorder was exacerbated by a pandemic and the economic chaos left in its wake.

An essential element of this context, however, is a nation awash in more than 300 million guns, most of them much more powerful and efficient than anything imagined in 1861. By themselves, the guns are just, well, guns. But they have become the essential symbol of right-wing protest and counter-protest. Demonstrators publicly brandish them in state houses and refer to them in not-very-subtle threatening ways.

If this is the context, the proximate catalyst for incendiary talk about a civil war is a president who publicly maintains that any election that he does not win is "rigged." His widespread allegations of election fraud have encouraged a sense of crisis and serve as a call to arms for some of President Donald Trump's less discriminating followers. At one point he even told the neofascist, white-nationalist group The Proud Boys to "stand by." What could go wrong?

As it happened, not much. We held an election and, all things considered, it went smoothly. There were some protests at polling stations. Recounts were demanded and carried out. Democrats won big with the presidency; Republicans held their own and made gains elsewhere. Somehow, amid all the threat of violence and disorder, the American electorate expressed its will, and it appears that its will is going to be honored. The civil war has fizzled out.

The danger hasn't been completely defused, however. Trump could easily smother lingering discontent by a customary, conventional act: a graceful concession that he has lost the election and an admonition to his followers to "stand down" rather than "stand by." The Republican leadership could help a lot, as well.

But such a concession by Trump would be deeply uncharacteristic; don't expect it to be forthcoming.

Nevertheless, the Trump era has served our country in two useful ways. First, it has reminded us of how fragile democracy is; it requires constant attention and care.

And second: Optimism doesn't come naturally to me, nor should it to anyone, after the last four years. Still, our ship of state moves with enormous momentum. It's heartening to see an administration characterized by chaos and division replaced by one determined to govern according to decent principles that have served us well.

Good. One civil war was enough.

What Elliot Page's coming out means to me as a 13-year-old transgender activist

By REBEKAH BRUESEHOFF
The Philadelphia Inquirer

Rebekah Bruesehoff is an award-winning transgender activist. She lives in Camden County, New Jersey.

Last week, Elliot Page came out as transgender. Elliot is an Oscar-nominated actor you might know from his roles in "Juno" and "Umbrella Academy." I didn't know him. I'd never seen his work. And yet, last week he changed my world for the better just by sharing his identity publicly.

I am a 13-year-old transgender activist who works to spread hope and create positive change for LGBTQ youth around the world. I socially transitioned five-and-a-half years ago, and it changed everything for me. I didn't have to pretend anymore to be someone I wasn't.

Now, I share my story in front of crowds and lead workshops to spread awareness about trans youth. I make my voice heard on the local, state and national level in support of trans-affirming policies. I work with schools, workplaces and faith communities to help create spaces where LGBTQ kids are fully accepted as themselves. I advocate to create a more inclusive world. I dream and hope for a world where all people, in all their uniqueness, can be safe and loved. There's a lot of work to do.

When I came out, Jazz Jennings, a transgender activist, was an important role model for me. Her sharing her story publicly showed me that I wasn't alone. I was only 8 years old, but watching her live her truth helped me see that while this journey may be difficult at times, being the best version of myself was all that mattered.

I choose to be visible as a transgender young person because I know that there are kids like me who need to know there is hope. Last year, in recognition of my advocacy work, Marvel made me a superhero in the series "Marvel's Hero Project" on Disney+. I received the most incredible pictures of transgender youth watching the episode and drawings of them as their own superheroes. By being myself in a world that all too often wishes I wasn't, I get to show others that they aren't alone.

THEO WARGO/GETTY IMAGES/TNS

Elliot Page attends the "Tales Of The City" New York premiere at The Metrograph on June 3, 2019, in New York City.

That's why Elliot Page's coming out matters. Elliot has a platform bigger than any I could imagine, reaching millions of people. Thanks to Elliot, more kids will know they aren't alone. More kids will see bright, beautiful possibilities for themselves. More people will learn what it means to be transgender and have a positive example to go with it. And more people will be inspired to show up as the fullest version of themselves.

In Elliot's statement, he said, "My joy is real, but it is also fragile. The truth is, despite feeling profoundly happy right now and knowing how much privilege I carry, I am also scared." This speaks volumes about what coming out really means to an LGBTQ person. So often, public conversations talk about how great it is to come out, how amazing it feels, and how we are a million times happier living as ourselves. That's all true, but it's also really scary to put yourself out there in such a vulnerable way. It's hard to carry the fear of what this means for your future.

Elliot's courage and authenticity inspires me and gives me hope that sooner than later, the stories told about transgender people will no longer be about the violence and discrimination we face, but the art we create, the people we are, and the contributions we make to society. To transgender kids all over the world, Elliot's coming out matters, whether they know who he is or not. It matters because the fans, costars, and industry members rallying around Elliot right now are showing the world how it's done—how to show up for transgender people.

Elliot wrote, "I love that I am trans. And I love that I am queer." Me too, Elliot. The more I know myself, the more I embrace myself, the more of me there is to bring to every single part of my life—my self, my friends, my family, and my advocacy. Together, we'll keep working to make this world a more inclusive and compassionate place.

BIDEN

From Page 8

Waiting will also give Biden time enough to repair Trump's rift with the other signatories, and establish a united position with which to confront Iran. He'll need to persuade the Europeans, Chinese and Russians that everybody's economic and security interests are best served by holding out for a deal that is comprehensive in nature, and not just in name—one that requires Iran to forgo not only the nuclear option but also its other dangerous activities.

To achieve this, Biden should recruit Israel and the Arab states to add their powers of persuasion to his. Such a consensus might even persuade Republican opponents of the nuclear deal to come onside, insuring any new agreement against the whims of a future president. A reasonable leader in Tehran would recognize the value in that.

Diplomacy with Iran is the smart course for Biden. But rushing into another flawed deal won't help anyone.

(Editorials are written by the Bloomberg Opinion editorial board.)

For more articles like this, please visit us at bloomberg.com/opinion

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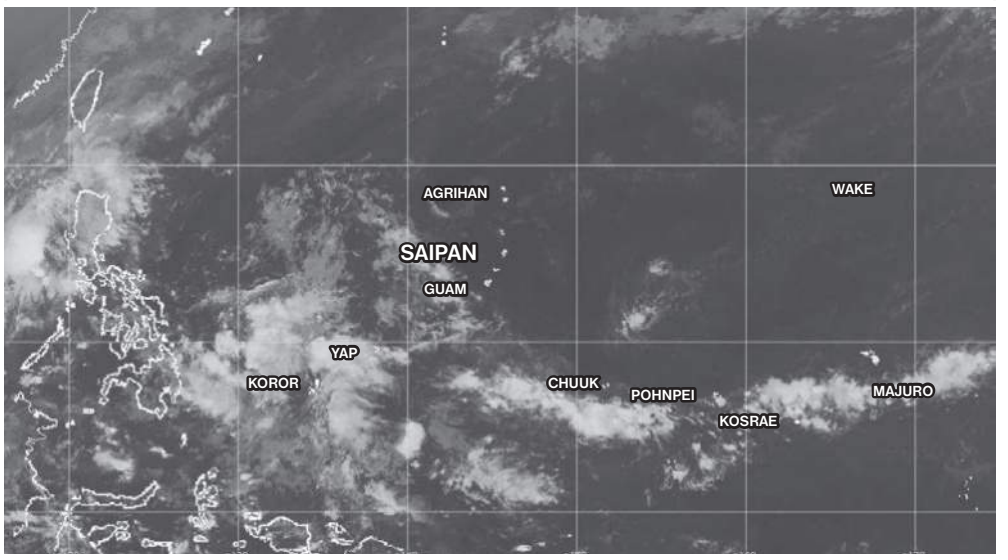
The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Mostly cloudy with scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
87° 77°	87° 77°	87° 77°	87° 77°	87° 77°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 7:44 AM, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2020

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Mostly cloudy skies encompass much of the Marianas this morning, with showers continuing to persist mainly for Guam. Drier air is trying to work into from the north and east though, with the latest Doppler radar loop finally showing a decreasing trend. Otherwise, moderate to fresh trade winds continue with the buoys showing wave heights of 7 to 8 feet at Ritidian and 5 to 6 feet at Tanapag.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

MICRONESIA	▲ ▼ °F	
Guam and Rota	Showers	86° / 79°
Palau	Thunderstorms	83° / 77°
Yap	Thunderstorms	85° / 79°
Chuuk	Thunderstorms	86° / 81°
Pohnpei	Thunderstorms	86° / 79°
Kosrae	Thunderstorms	86° / 79°
Majuro	Thunderstorms	85° / 81°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:31 AM	5:46 PM
Thursday	6:32 AM	5:47 PM
Friday	6:32 AM	5:47 PM
Saturday	6:33 AM	5:47 PM
Sunday	6:33 AM	5:48 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	12:47 AM	1:22 PM	-
Thursday	1:43 AM	2:05 PM	-
Friday	2:40 AM	2:49 PM	-
Saturday	3:40 AM	3:36 PM	-
Sunday	4:42 AM	4:27 PM	-

AROUND THE GLOBE	▲ ▼ °F	
Auckland	Partly Cloudy	75° / 63°
Beijing	Sunny	39° / 19°
Hong Kong	Sunny	66° / 52°
Honolulu	Showers	81° / 70°
London	Cloudy	46° / 37°
Los Angeles	Sunny	73° / 50°
Manila	Rain	84° / 75°
Melbourne	Showers	86° / 63°
Miami	Partly Cloudy	80° / 71°
New York	Showers	47° / 38°
Osaka	Partly Cloudy	52° / 36°
Paris	Showers	48° / 39°
Busan	Mostly Sunny	46° / 34°
Rome	Mostly Sunny	52° / 32°
Salem	Showers	65° / 48°
San Francisco	Sunny	62° / 45°
Seoul	Sunny	28° / 14°
Tokyo	Sunny	55° / 36°
Washington, DC	Partly Cloudy	57° / 39°

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
1:26 AM	LOW TIDE	1.24
8:10 AM	HIGH TIDE	0.15
3:13 PM	LOW TIDE	1.81
9:57 PM	HIGH TIDE	0.54

STOP THE SPREAD

The Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. continue to encourage residents within the Marianas to practice social distancing, which means avoiding close contact with people in order to avoid catching the virus yourself and to avoid passing it on to others.

- Stay home as much as possible. Avoid unnecessary travel or public places.
- Avoid social gatherings in groups of more than 10.
- Choose drive-thru, take-out, or delivery options, or outdoor seating, if available, when dining in.
- Send only one healthy adult from the household run necessary errands, such as getting groceries or picking up medications. Leave children, elderly, and other vulnerable people at home as much as possible. When returning home from an errand, wash your hands before doing anything else.
- Older adults and people with chronic medical conditions are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness. People at high risk should stay at home as much as possible.
- Create a household plan of action, https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/checklisthousehold-ready.html
- Ensure a 30-day supply of all medicines.

Continue good hand hygiene

- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, avoid touching your face, cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not readily available.

Know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and what to do if you become symptomatic

- Stay home when you are sick and if you recently traveled to a place with COVID-19. Self-quarantine means:
- ❏ Choosing a room in your house that can be used to separate sick household members from others.
- ❏ Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- ❏ Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- ❏ Limiting visitors

CHCC appreciates the patience and understanding of the community at this time. To obtain general information about the CNMI COVID-19 response, contact the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force Hotline at 287-0046, 287-0489, 287-1089. These numbers are available Monday to Sunday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For medical information about COVID-19, reach out to the COVID-19 Infoline at the following numbers: 285-1672/1352. These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For mental health support and helpful tips during a crisis, call the Mental Health Support Line at 285-1856, 323-6560, 323-6561 These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30 pm. For the 24/7 Disaster Distress Helpline, call SAMSHA at 1-800-985-5990.

For more information about DIY face coverings, visit https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html

For more information about CHCC programs, follow CHCC on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter at @cnmichcc, check out our website at www.chcc.gov.mp or call us at (670) 234-8950.

For more information on the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force, visit www.governor.gov.mpand, follow @GovernorCNMI on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

This health advisory may be found online at http://www.chcc.gov.mp/pressrelease.html and at www.governor.gov.mp/covid-19.

Rumor control

During crises like this, oftentimes the spread of misinformation is just as dangerous as the virus itself. The CNMI is reminded to only share official and verified notices, press releases, and advisories from the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and CHCC.

Source: Office of the Governor

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF NOVEMBER 1, 2020

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA117	6:55am	7:35am	1, 4, 6

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

UA117/183	6:55am	9:50pm	1 via Guam

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

UA183	8:00pm	9:50pm	1, 3, 5

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	5:10am	5:51am	1, 4, 6

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA184/174	10:40pm	5:51am+1	3, 5 via Guam

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

UA184	10:40pm	4:30am+1	1, 3, 5

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF OCTOBER 8, 2020

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1301	8:30AM	9:00AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
1302	11:00AM	11:30AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
1303	3:30PM	4:00PM	Mon/Wed/Fri

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3101	9:30AM	10:00AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
3102	12:00AM	12:30AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
3103	4:30PM	5:00PM	Mon/Wed/Fri

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3401	12:15	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
4301	13:00	13:30	Temporarily Unavailable

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1201	7:00	7:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1202	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	10:00	10:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1205	11:00	11:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1206	12:00	12:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1207	13:00	13:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1208	14:00	14:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1209	15:00	15:15	Daily
1210	16:00	16:15	Daily
1211	17:00	17:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1212	18:00	18:15	Temporarily Unavailable

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
2101	7:30	7:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2102	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	10:30	10:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2105	11:30	11:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2106	12:30	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2107	13:30	13:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2108	14:30	14:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2109	15:30	15:45	Daily
2110	16:30	16:45	Daily
2111	17:30	17:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2112	18:30	18:45	Temporarily Unavailable

Business

BAB Korean Restaurant unveils loyalty card

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Now there's more reason to order food from BAB Korean Restaurant, after the only Korean drive-thru establishment on island introduced its loyalty card program last Dec. 1.

Restaurant staff Dante Conlu said the loyalty card is a kind of thank you for their loyal customers as well as a Christmas gift to the community.

Any $20 purchase will get you one stamp and the usual free Hawaiian iced tea. Accumulate eight stamps and you can redeem it for any of BAB Korean Restaurant's Cup BAB items.

BAB Korean Restaurant's Cup BAB items include Galbi Soup ($8), Kimchi Soup ($7), Kimchi Fried Rice ($6), Original BAB ($5), Volcano BAB ($5), Ugly Pop BAB ($6), Squid BAB ($6), Shake BAB ($6), Combo BAB ($7), Tteok ($6), Dak-Gangjeong or sweet and sour chicken ($6), K-Noodles ($5), Mandoo ($3), LA-BBQ BAB ($8), Pork-BBQ BAB ($7), and Ocean BAB ($7).

The loyalty card promo started last Dec. 1 and will conclude on Jan. 31, 2021 with the possibility of being extended, according to Conlu.

BAB Korean Restaurant is also expanding to San Jose with the soon-to-be-opened stand-alone Cup BAB snack bar on the left side of San Jose Mart.

Conlu said there's just such a high demand for their drive-thru items that they decided to open a "mini-branch" in the middle of the island in San Jose. He said the Cup BAB snack bar will be exclusively to-go and is envisioned to carry 5-8 select items from their drive-thru menu. It's being eyed to open from 8am to 5pm daily.

As far as reopening the 200-seat BAB Korean Restaurant, Conlu said the return of dine-in operations is still being evaluated by management. However, he said when they do reopen the restaurant it will have a drastically new menu and a new dine-in concept never seen before in Korean restaurants on Saipan.

BAB Korean Restaurant opened last Jan. 4 and serves authentic Korean cuisine. The owner named it such because "bab" in Korean is another term for "bap," which means rice and one look at their menu shows the preponderance of rice dishes or bibimbap.

BAB Korean Restaurant is located at the former Caesar's Sauna property along Beach Road in Garapan. Their drive-thru counter is open from 10am to 8pm and they accept credit cards.

For more information or for pre-orders, call 233-4222 or 483-5500 or find them on Facebook.

MARK RABAGO
BAB Korean Restaurant's loyalty card promo started last Dec. 1 and will conclude in Jan. 31, 2021 with the possibility of being extended.

MARK RABAGO
BAB Korean Restaurant's Dante Conlu, center, poses with the rest of the staff.

MARK RABAGO
BAB Korean Restaurant's latest Cup BAB item is their pickled veggies, right.

Survey: Business economists see full recovery by end of 2021

NEW YORK (AP)—The U.S. economy's growth is likely slowing as 2020 comes to a close, but a growing number of economists expect it to claw back to its pre-pandemic strength by the second half of next year as vaccines for the coronavirus become widely distributed.

That's the view from the latest survey of the National Association for Business Economics. It found that 73% of surveyed forecasters say the economy will return to its pre-pandemic level by late 2021. That reflects greater optimism than the forecasters had expressed a couple months ago, when just 38% of them said they thought a full recovery could occur before 2022.

Economists have been saying for months that only when vaccines are widely available to control or defeat the virus will the economy be able to sustain any meaningful recovery from the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Hopes that one or more coronavirus vaccines will roll out soon are helping drive expectations higher, said the survey's chair, Holly Wade.

"NABE panelists have become more optimistic, on balance," Wade said, "with nearly one-third revising their outlook higher based on recent news of effective vaccines."

Pharmaceutical companies are asking U.S. regulators to allow the use of their vaccine candidates after reporting encouraging data from clinical trials. The hope is that a wide rollout would mean fewer restrictions on businesses next year and more confidence among shoppers and companies to spend more.

In the meantime, the economy is struggling to gain traction. Measures of consumer confidence, which is critical to spending and growth, remain well below their pre-pandemic levels.

On Friday, the government reported that employers sharply scaled back their hiring in November, adding 245,000 jobs—the fewest since April and the fifth straight monthly slowdown. The report provided the latest evidence that the job market and economy are faltering in the face of a virus that has been shattering daily records for confirmed infections.

Japan's economy grows 22.9% in 3Q, bouncing back from COVID

MITO, Japan (AP)—Japan's economy expanded at a 22.9% annual rate in the last quarter, as businesses and personal spending recovered from pandemic-related shocks in the spring and early summer.

Economists said the upward revision released Tuesday was in line with forecasts and suggests Japan's economy, the world's third largest, is on the mend from the recession that started in late 2019, even before coronavirus outbreaks hit.

"The sizeable upward revision to Q3 GDP and the sharp rise in 'core' household spending in October support our view that Japan's economy will recover from the pandemic faster than the consensus expects," Tom Learmouth of Capital Economics said in a commentary.

"We think GDP will rise by another 2.1% (quarter-to-quarter) in this quarter and surprise to the upside next year," he said.

Core household spending excludes costs for housing and purchases of vehicles and other volatile expenditures and is thought to best reflect consumer demand.

As is true for most major economies, the setback dealt by the pandemic has left Japan still at a lower level of economic output, 3.9% below the level of the last quarter of 2019, Learmouth said.

The expansion in the July-September quarter coincided with a push to encourage domestic spending to make up for the loss of foreign tourism with "Go To Travel" and "Go To Eat" programs offering steep discounts on hotels and dining out.

The economy contracted at a 29.2% annualized pace in April-June, when the government declared a state of emergency and sought to quell virus outbreaks with various precautions including urging businesses to let people work from home. With international travel at a near standstill, the 2020 Tokyo Olympics were postponed.

The earlier estimate showed a 21.4% expansion.

The economy grew at a 5.3% quarterly pace, revised upward from the earlier 5.0% estimate.

Most of the extra growth came from consumer and corporate spending. Household spending outpaced retail sales, suggesting many people were making purchases online.

Government spending also was slightly higher than earlier reported.

LEADING INDICATORS

DOW	S&P	NASDAQ
30,069.79	3,691.96	12,519.94
−148.47	−7.16	+55.71
.49%	0.19%	0.45%

EXCHANGE RATES

In U.S. dollar terms

Australian Dollar	1.3468	Hong Kong Dollar	7.7508	Russian Ruble	72.7034
British Pound	0.7487	Indian Rupee	73.4417	Singapore Dollar	1.3355
Canadian Dollar	1.2785	Japanese Yen	104.0450	South Korean Won	1063.77
Chinese Yuan	6.4477	Malaysian Ringgit	4.0346	Swiss Franc	0.8910
Euro	0.8255	New Zealand Dollar	1.4203	Taiwan Dollar	27.8146
		Philippine Peso	47.3083	Thailand Baht	30.1140

Nation

Sources: Biden picks Lloyd Austin as secretary of defense

AP

In this Sept. 16, 2015, photo, U.S. Central Command Commander Gen. Lloyd Austin III, testifies on Capitol Hill in Washington. Biden will nominate retired four-star Army general Lloyd J. Austin to be secretary of defense.

WASHINGTON (AP)— President-elect Joe Biden will nominate retired four-star Army general Lloyd J. Austin to be secretary of defense, according to four people familiar with the decision. If confirmed by the Senate, Austin would be the first Black leader of the Pentagon.

Biden selected Austin over the longtime front-runner candidate, Michele Flournoy, a former senior Pentagon official and Biden supporter who would have been the first woman to serve as defense secretary. Biden also had considered Jeh Johnson, a former Pentagon general counsel and former secretary of homeland defense.

The impending nomination of Austin was confirmed by four people with knowledge of the pick who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the selection hadn't been formally announced. Biden offered and Austin accepted the post on Sunday, according to a person familiar with the process.

As a career military officer, the 67-year-old Austin is likely to face opposition from some in Congress and in the defense establishment who believe in drawing a clear line between civilian and military leadership of the Pentagon. Although many previous defense secretaries have served briefly in the military, only two — George C. Marshall and James Mattis — have been career officers. Marshall also served as secretary of state.

Like Mattis, Austin would need to obtain a congressional waiver to serve as defense secretary. Congress intended civilian control of the military when it created the position of secretary of defense in 1947 and prohibited a recently retired military officer from holding the position.

One of the people who confirmed the pick said Austin's selection was about choosing the best possible person but acknowledged that pressure had built to name a candidate of color and that Austin's stock had risen in recent days.

Austin is a 1975 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and served 41 years in uniform.

Biden has known Austin at least since the general's years leading U.S. and coalition troops in Iraq while Biden was vice president. Austin was commander in Baghdad of the Multinational Corps-Iraq in 2008 when Barack Obama was elected president, and he returned to lead U.S. troops from 2010 through 2011.

Austin also served in 2012 as the first Black vice chief of staff of the Army, the service's No. 2-ranking position. A year later he assumed command of U.S. Central Command, where he fashioned and began implementing a U.S. military strategy for rolling back the Islamic State militants in Iraq and Syria.

Austin retired from the Army in 2016, and he would need a congressional waiver of the legal requirement that a former member of the military be out of uniform at least seven years before serving as secretary of defense. That waiver has been granted only twice — most recently in the case of Mattis, the retired Marine general who served as President Donald Trump's first Pentagon chief.

The Mattis period at the Pentagon is now viewed by some as evidence of why a recently retired military officer should serve as defense secretary only in rare exceptions. Although Mattis remains widely respected for his military prowess and intellect, critics say he tended to surround himself with military officers at the expense of a broader civilian perspective. He resigned in December 2018 in protest of Trump's policies.

Does Trump have power to pardon himself? It's complicated

WASHINGTON (AP)— President Donald Trump has declared that he has the "absolute right" to issue a pardon to himself. Yet the law is much murkier than his confidence suggests.

No president has attempted to pardon himself while in office, so if Trump tries to do so in the next six weeks, he will be venturing into legally untested territory without clear guidance from the Constitution or from judges. Legal experts are divided on an inherently ambiguous question that was left vague by the Founding Fathers and has never had to be definitively resolved in court.

"It's impossible to anticipate every factual scenario that could come up under a legal provision. This is why we have the courts," said University of Baltimore law professor Kimberly Wehle.

Talk of a potential pardon comes with Trump facing a swirl of investigations as he prepares to leave office, including New York State inquiries into whether he misled tax authorities, banks or business partners.

In favor of a self-pardon is the broad power the Constitution affords a president when it comes to issuing clemency for federal crimes—both charged and not-yet charged—and the absence of any law or language that explicitly prohibits such an act.

But some scholars say a self-pardon collides with other provisions of the Constitution or even fundamental principles of law. The Constitution's text—affording the president "power to grant reprieves and pardons for offenses against the United States, except in cases of impeachment"—can be read to suggest that the Founding Fathers envisioned some sort of limitations on a president's pardon power. It could also mean the power is to be used on someone else, not yourself.

"You could say, implicit in the definition of a pardon or implicit in the notion of granting a pardon—because the Constitution uses the word 'grant'—is that it's two separate people," said Brian Kalt, a law professor at Michigan State University. "You can't grant something to yourself. You can't pardon yourself."

It could also seem to run afoul of the fundamental principle that no one—in this case, a president issuing himself a pardon—may serve as a judge in his own case.

That was the reasoning cited in a 1974 opinion from the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel, dated days before President Richard Nixon's resignation, that said "it would seem" a president could not pardon himself.

But that same opinion does suggest a potential workaround, envisioning as legally acceptable a scenario in which a president declares himself temporarily unfit for office under the Constitution's 25th Amendment and transfers power to the vice president, who could then issue a pardon. The president could then either resign or resume his duties, the opinion said.

The question of whether Trump will do it, though, is as unsettled as the question of whether he can.

US fully restores protections for young immigrants

SAN DIEGO (AP)—The Trump administration said Monday that it fully restored the Obama-era Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program that shields hundreds of thousands of young people from deportation, complying with a federal judge's order.

The Department of Homeland Security posted on its website that it is accepting new applications, petitions for two-year renewals and requests for permission to temporarily leave the U.S.

The department said it "may seek relief from the order," signaling that its concession to the court order may be short-lived if its legal efforts succeed.

The announcement is still a major victory for young people who have been unable to apply since Trump ended DACA in September 2017. His administration has long argued that DACA is unconstitutional.

After the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in June that Trump violated federal law in how he ended the program, Chad Wolf, the acting Homeland Security secretary, said the administration would study its options and, until then, wouldn't accept new applications and would grant renewals for one year instead two. DACA shields about 650,000 people from deportation and makes them eligible for work permits.

Monday's announcement came hours before a deadline set by District Judge Nicholas Garaufis in the Eastern District of New York for the administration to post public notice that it would accept applications under terms before Trump ended DACA in 2017. The judge ruled Friday that Wolf was unlawfully serving in his position.

DACA was started in 2012 during the Obama administration. It allows certain immigrants who were brought to the country illegally as children to work and be exempt from deportation, though it does not confer legal status on recipients.

President-elect Joe Biden has pledged to reinstate DACA when he takes office in January but permanent legal status and a path to citizenship would require congressional approval.

DACA recipients and their supporters greeted the news with a mix of elation and awareness that their futures are precarious, even with Biden's support.

Maria Garcia, 18, an aerospace engineering student at Arizona State University, said she will apply for the program as soon as she can. She and her parents and two brothers arrived in Phoenix in 2006 Mexico. Her older brother, now 23, is already a DACA recipient and has a job. Her younger brother, now 16, is in high school and plans to eventually seek DACA protection as well.

Asia

South Korean minister warns of virus 'war zone'

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—South Korea's health minister said Monday that the Seoul metropolitan area is now a "COVID-19 war zone," as the country reported another 615 new infections and the virus appeared to be spreading faster.

The country has recorded more than 5,300 new infections in the past 10 days and Monday was the 30th day in a row of triple-digit daily jumps.

Most of the new infections were detected in the Seoul metropolitan area where health workers are struggling to stem transmissions tied to various places, including restaurants, schools, hospitals and long-term care facilities.

"The capital area is now a COVID-19 war zone," Health Minister Park Neung-hoo said in a virus meeting, pleading for citizen vigilance.

He said the country may have to further increase social distancing to prevent the resurgence in the capital area from "exploding into a major outbreak nationwide and collapsing the health-care system."

While South Korea managed to contain a major outbreak in its southeastern region in spring by channeling nationwide health resources and personnel, it's less clear where the reinforcements will come if the virus wreaks havoc in the densely-populated capital area, where half of the country's 51 million people live.

While President Moon Jae-in's government had been eager to tout the country's previous gains against the virus, there's criticism that it gambled on its own success by moving quickly to ease social distancing restrictions to the lowest level in October even as the virus was still spreading.

Officials have moved to restore some restrictions in the capital area in in recent weeks, shutting down nightclubs, karaoke rooms and gyms, reducing in-person school classes and allowing restaurants to provide only deliveries and take-outs after 9 p.m.

In other developments in the region:

■ Authorities have completed a third round of coronavirus tests in China's northeastern city of Manzhouli, where three new cases were reported on Monday. The city government said testing of 200,745 people wrapped up on Saturday following two earlier rounds last month. No new positive cases were found and the three announced Monday were among those previously isolated as suspected cases, authorities said. Testing has been accompanied by travel restrictions and the quarantining of suspected cases and close contacts of those infected, as China strives to contain the outbreak in the city on the Russian border. China reported 15 new cases on Monday, 12 of them brought from outside. Hospitals are currently treating 281 people for COVID-19 while 231 people are being monitored after having tested positive for the virus while showing no symptoms. China doesn't include asymptomatic cases in its virus tallies.

■ A Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson says the country is following the further spread of coronavirus in the U.S. with a "heavy heart." The virus was first detected in the central Chinese city of Wuhan late last year and critics have accused the government of botching its initial response, setting off the pandemic that has killed more than 1.5 million people, including more than 282,000 in the U.S. China has rejected such accusations, saying it's 76-day lockdown of Wuhan and other strict measures bought the rest of the world time to prepare. "We have taken the most comprehensive, stringent and thorough prevention and control measures, taking the lead in controlling the epidemic and resuming production," Hua Chunying said at a daily ministry briefing on Monday.

Duterte rules out Christmas truce with communist rebels

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—The Philippine president has ruled out any cease-fire or resumption of long-stalled peace talks with communist guerrillas and renewed a vow to destroy the insurgents in his last two years in office.

President Rodrigo Duterte made the remarks Monday night after the military refused to recommend any cease-fire traditionally observed by troops and the New People's Army rebels during the Christmas season. The military welcomed the president's decision, saying the rebels were "notoriously insincere."

Duterte's increasingly hostile position reflects how far he has veered from his initial reconciliatory posture when he offered key Cabinet posts to left-wing activists to foster peace negotiations with the rebels after he took office in 2016. The cordial atmosphere eventually unraveled after government forces and the rebels accused each other of insincerity and of launching attacks against each other.

"There will be no cease-fire ever again under my term as president. For all intents and purposes, the cease-fire is dead," Duterte said.

He also rejected the resumption of peace talks, saying he could be impeached or shot dead by the police and military if he agreed to what he said was a rebel demand to share power in a coalition government.

"No stupid president will allow it," the tough-talking Duterte said. "It's either I will be impeached or the military and the police will shoot me ... you will really be killed because you are a traitor of your country."

There was no immediate reaction from the rebels.

The rebels have not publicly demanded a share in political power in talks with the Duterte administration, although the issue could possibly have been discussed if the negotiations did not collapse and both sides proceeded to tackle an agenda on political and constitutional reforms.

But Duterte said without elaborating that rebel "narratives" show that "you are out to share power. So, I have to destroy you."

Duterte and the military have also accused left-wing groups and legislators of conspiring with the rebels against his administration. The allegation has been rejected by left-wing activists, saying such "fabricated claims" endanger their lives and were designed to muzzle freedom of expression.

In 1992, the Philippines repealed a Cold War-era anti-subversion law that made membership in the Communist Party of the Philippines a crime. But Duterte argued that party members could still be prosecuted if they commit crimes like murder, arson and rape in fighting the government.

"I'm trying to sort out what we will do to you because you are now criminals," Duterte said, linking one left-wing legislator to communist insurgents.

World

UN envoy warns new Congo crisis could impact security

UNITED NATIONS (AP)—The U.N. envoy for Congo warned Monday that the political crisis in Congo sparked by the end of a coalition between the parties of President Felix Tshisekedi and former president Joseph Kabila may affect the African nation's economic and security situation if it isn't resolved.

AP

In this image made from UNTV video, Felix Tshisekedi, President of Congo, speaks in a pre-recorded message which was played during the U.N. General Assembly's special session to discuss the response to COVID-19 and the best path to recovery from the pandemic, Thursday, Dec. 3, 2020, at UN headquarters in New York.

Leila Zerrougui told the U.N. Security Council it can play a significant role and foster a negotiated settlement that would place "the interests of the Congolese people above short-term political goals which are liable to further foment tensions."

The 15 council members held closed consultations after her briefing but took no immediate action and made no statement.

Stressing that Congo "cannot afford a grave institutional crisis," Zerrougui said it needs "stable and functional institutions" that can get to work as soon as possible and focus on national economic recovery and stabilizing the country's volatile mineral-rich east ahead of general elections scheduled for 2023.

Tshisekedi announced the decision to scrap the alliance between his Cap for Change party and the pro-Kabila Common Front for the Congo party on Sunday after months of political deadlock in Congo's legislature where Kabila's supporters have a majority. The president cited disputes on issues affecting security, the organization of elections, independence of the judiciary and management of the vast country, which is the size of Western Europe.

Tshisekedi said he was appointing an official to identify a new parliamentary majority that will support his reform agenda, and if that is not possible he threatened to dissolve parliament and call for new elections.

Tshisekedi took over from Kabila in January 2019 after a disputed vote in Congo's first peaceful transition of power since independence from Belgium in 1960.

Zerrougui, who heads the nearly 17,500-strong U.N. peacekeeping mission in Congo, said that following Tshisekedi's announcement, Kabila's party "rejected the diagnosis of a crisis" and called the president's decision to scuttle the coalition "unconstitutional." At the same time, she said, a number of civil society and opposition representatives welcomed and supported the president's assessment and decisions.

The U.N. envoy noted, with regret, "that there have been heated tensions between the fighters and militants of the two political forces around the parliament."

In light of the escalating tensions, Zerrougui said, she and others in the peacekeeping mission known as MONUSCO have met over the past month with representatives from both sides as well as civil society representatives "seeking to prompt them to resolve their differences through dialogue and seeking to avoid any further provocations that may inflame violence."

"We shall continue to harness our good offices to facilitate an expeditious and peaceful resolution to this delicate political situation, a situation which, if it persists, may have serious and adverse consequences on the economic and security situation in the country, amid the COVID-19 pandemic," she warned.

Nobel ceremonies go low-key this year because of coronavirus

STOCKHOLM (AP)—The pomp and ceremony of the Nobel prize ceremonies have been reined in this year amid measures to slow the spread of the coronavirus. There will be no glitzy banquet honoring winners in Stockholm or Oslo as the global pandemic curtails the usual celebrations.

Instead, their achievements will be recognized and rewarded at low-key ceremonies where they live and work in Europe and the United States.

Twelve laureates were named in 2020. A Nobel prize comes with a 10-million krona ($1.1 million) cash award—to be shared in some cases—diplomas and gold medals. Traditionally, the lavish Nobel ceremonies are held Dec. 10, the anniversary of the death of prize founder Alfred Nobel, at an ornate city hall in Stockholm for all but the Peace Prize that is held in Oslo in neighboring Norway. Nobel wanted it that way, for reasons that he kept to himself.

The first of the prizes was awarded Sunday to literature prize winner American poet Louise Glück during a ceremony in her garden.

"It was such an honor and a true pleasure to present the Nobel Prize in Literature to Louise Glück in her own garden, now peacefully resting for the winter and reminding us of her poems," said Anika Rembe, Sweden's envoy in New York, of the event. Glück was awarded the prestigious prize "for her unmistakable poetic voice that with austere beauty makes individual existence universal."

Glück said in her acceptance speech that "It was a surprise to me on the morning of October 8th to feel the sort of panic I have been describing. The light was too bright. The scale too vast."

"Those of us who write books presumably wish to reach many. But some poets do not see reaching many in spatial terms, as in the filled auditorium. They see reaching many temporally, sequentially, many over time, into the future, but in some profound way these readers always come singly, one by one," she wrote.

Good Housekeeping

Tips for making DIY ornaments from materials you have around the house

By SAM SCHIPANI
BANGOR DAILY NEWS, MAINE

Decorating for the holiday season is underway. If you're looking for something special to do, making homemade ornaments is both a fun thing to do with loved ones and a way to add meaning to your decorations.

"Gather your family or friends around the table, and spend a day making ornaments," said Morgan Rublee, who runs the Etsy shop Designs by Rublee out of Dover-Foxcroft.

"Every time you put those homemade ornaments on the tree, you will be reminded of the day you spent with people you love."

Here are some tips from professional crafters on how to make your own ornaments.

Pick a design (but keep it simple)

The first thing you will want to do is decide what kind of ornament you want to make. Tying the design to a memory from the year will help guide your search for materials and make the crafting project more meaningful.

"My Etsy business was born when my mom wanted a special chicken ornament to commemorate the year we started keeping poultry," said Moriah Van Wyk, who creates crafts for the Etsy shop Maine Maid Primitives in Oakland. "Now when I see the ornaments, I remember both our first flock and all the fun I've had filling and mailing orders since then."

Whatever you want to make, Elizabeth Jerome, who runs the Etsy shop ERJ Studio in Falmouth, said to keep the design simple.

"Focus on making ornaments that remind you of special times in your life, and don't worry about having them come out perfectly," Jerome said.

Van Wyk also said not to bite off more than you can chew when it comes to design.

"Nothing kills the holiday spirit like frustration over a project that looked good in your head but becomes too complicated to execute," she said. "Try picking just a few notable features to emphasize, such as shape or texture. This makes your whole tree less overwhelming, makes the ornament distinguishable from a distance and simplifies the crafting process."

Gather tools and materials

Even simple crafting projects will require a few tools. Odds are, though, you already have the things you need gathering dust in a crafts closet or somewhere else in your house.

"The great thing about making your own ornaments is that you probably have the basic supplies in your house already," Rublee said. "For example, fishing line is the perfect hanging string and paper clips work great as hooks."

Jerome said that other materials that work well to attach ornaments to trees include clothespins, strings, ribbons, tin foil, pipe cleaners and yarn.

Hillock said that scissors and glue (she noted that a hot glue gun or E-6000 are her go-to glues) are essential, and a basic sewing kit with a needle and thread may also come and handy. Ultimately, though, the tools you need will depend on what materials you find to use.

"If working with fabrics or yarn, think sewing basics: scissors, needles, thread, and maybe crochet hooks or knitting needles," Van Wyk said. "If [you're] working with wood [or] wire, think jigsaws, needle-nose pliers, wire-cutters and similar tools."

Upcycle materials

Some of the best ornament-making materials might just be sitting in your trash can or recycling bin.

"One question to ask yourself when considering handmade ornaments is, "What can I repurpose?" Van Wyk said. "Look at common objects from different angles. For example, on my family's Christmas tree hang strawberries made of walnut shells and reindeer made of wooden clothespins."

Instead of tossing scraps of fabric, leftover yarn or even that ratty t-shirt, think of how you can craft it.

"I'm a quilter, so my favorite material for ornaments is fabric," Hillock said. "[If you] have an old flannel shirt or a pair of jeans that have seen better days, get out your scissors [and] cut them up into ornaments shapes, trees, bells [and] stockings."

Another excellent upcycling material for ornaments is cardboard, perhaps from all of the cardboard boxes for gifts you have ordered for the season or from cardboard rolls for paper towels or toilet paper rolls.

"You can trace an image onto fabric and a piece of cardboard, glue the fabric to the same shape of cardboard you cut out [and] decorate with ribbons, felt [and] buttons," Hillock said.

If you have scraps of yarn from knitting or crocheting projects, Rublee suggested trying to make a pom pom ornament. Cut out a four inch by three inch piece of cardboard and wrap your yarn vertically around the cardboard, layering the yarn on top of itself. Once you've added several layers, carefully slide the yarn off the cardboard and tie another piece of yarn around the middle, cut the end of the yarn and shape it onto a pom-pom.

"Take another piece of yarn to make a hanging loop," Rublee said. "A tree full of colorful pom-poms is so adorable."

Head out to your yard

Natural materials make for great DIY ornaments as well.

"I love to use Maine's natural beauties, such as pine cones, birch wood, acorns and seashells," Jerome said. "Gathering a bunch of raw materials and laying them out on the table is a great inspiration. We had some birch slices from a previous project out on the table, we decided to try screen printing on them and they came out great."

Carolyn Breau, who runs the Etsy shop Breau's Eye View of Maine, also uses birch slices for her homemade ornaments. Instead of painting them, though, she burns designs into the wood. This does require some special equipment, though, in the form of a wood burning pen.

From left (clockwise): Ornaments made from birch tree slices. Courtesy of Elizabeth Jerome & Carolyn Breau.

"They can be found online or at local craft stores, or even Walmart," Breau said. "The tool itself has its own unique look that is hard to replicate, but you can certainly use paint or even markers to still make a cool design on the wood."

Check the kitchen

Your spice cabinet might hold a few surprising materials that work well for homemade ornaments.

Hillock said that in addition to items from nature, she likes to use things like cinnamon sticks for her homemade ornaments.

"You could use them as a tree trunk for a Christmas tree ornament," Hillock said. "You could also glue them into the shape of a star. They smell fabulous."

Another kitchen material that is great for making ornaments is dried orange slices.

"Thin orange slices dried in the oven and hung so that the Christmas lights glows through them are subtle but beautiful ornaments I have loved for years," Van Wyk said.

Try, try again

No matter how experienced you are at crafting, it may take a few tries for you to get your ornament just right.

Hillock suggested making a "test" ornament or two before you start making gifts for your friends and family.

"When I have an idea I usually end up making changes before I finish," Hillock said.

If your first try isn't successful, keep trying. Ultimately, though, don't get frustrated if your ornament isn't perfect. In fact, the imperfections are part of the charm of homemade ornaments.

Life & Style

The Dylan catalog, a 60-year rock'n'roll odyssey, is sold

NEW YORK (AP)—To many music lovers, Bob Dylan's songbook is priceless. Well, now he's put a price on it.

The Nobel Prize-winning songwriter has sold publishing rights to his catalog of more than 600 songs, one of the greatest treasures in popular music, to the Universal Music Publishing Group, it was announced on Monday.

His collection includes modern standards like "Blowin' in the Wind," "Tangled Up in Blue" and "Like a Rolling Stone" through to this year's 17-minute opus on the Kennedy assassination, "Murder Most Foul." The body of work may only be matched for its breadth and influence by the Beatles, whose songs were re-acquired by Paul McCartney in 2017.

The price was not disclosed, but industry experts have suggested the sale is in the range of $300 million to a half-billion dollars.

The sale gives Universal the right, in perpetuity, to lease use of Dylan's compositions to advertisers and movie, television or video game producers, or anyone who thinks his words and melodies could enhance their product.

Dylan's team cautioned anyone against thinking this is a sign that the 79-year-old music legend is checking out. Rather, it seems like he's taking advantage of a favorable business climate to find a comfortable home for his life's work.

In cultural terms, Dylan's catalog is "quite literally priceless," said Anthony DeCurtis, a veteran music writer and contributing editor at Rolling Stone.

"It has been 60 years and it's still going strong," DeCurtis said. "There's no reason to believe there's going to be any diminishment in its significance."

Dylan topped the Rolling Stone list of the 100 Greatest Songwriters of All Time in 2015 and "Like A Rolling Stone" was named by the magazine as the best song ever written. He won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2016, the only songwriter to receive the award.

Until Dylan and the Beatles, it was considered unusual for popular music songwriters to perform their own work. In an illustration of his lasting influence, 38-year-old Nashville-based singer Emma Swift is releasing a collection of Dylan covers this week, "Blonde on the Tracks." The title is a nod to the classic Dylan albums "Blonde on Blonde" and "Blood on the Tracks."

Dylan's songs have been recorded more than 6,000 times, by artists from dozens of countries, cultures and music genres. Notable releases include the Byrds' chart-topping version of "Mr. Tambourine Man," Jimi Hendrix's reworking of "All Along the Watchtower" and Adele's cover of "Make You Feel My Love."

This handout photo released by the Smithsonian's National Zoo shows a panda cub named Xiao Qi Ji in Washington.

SMITHSONIAN'S NATIONAL ZOO VIA AP

Longtime National Spelling Bee director steps down

The longtime executive director of the Scripps National Spelling Bee has stepped down.

Scripps announced Paige Kimble's departure on Monday, effective immediately, after 22 years in charge of the world's preeminent spelling competition.

Kimble's final year on the job ended up being the first year without a bee since 1945. The event was canceled because of the coronavirus pandemic. It is normally held in late May at a convention center outside Washington and includes hundreds of spellers from around the country, along with a handful of international competitors. ESPN televises the final rounds of the bee.

Cincinnati-based Scripps has yet to announce plans for next year's bee, but schools have been holding competitions this fall that serve as the first steps toward qualifying. Kari Wethington, a Scripps spokeswoman, said Monday that "the bee team is planning to host a competition in 2021."

Like many others with prominent roles in staging the bee, Kimble is a former speller. She won the bee in 1981. A year earlier, she finished second to Jacques Bailly, who is now the bee's longtime pronouncer.

Kimble began working for Scripps in 1991, shortly after graduating from college, and became executive director in 1998. During her tenure, the national exposure on ESPN and the quirky charisma of the young spellers, who can compete through the eighth grade, have led to increased popularity for the competition. ***(AP)***

National Zoo extends panda deal with China through 2023

WASHINGTON (AP)—The National Zoo has struck a new extension of its long-standing agreement with the Chinese government that will keep the zoo's iconic giant pandas in Washington for another three years.

But the agreement also calls for all three pandas—baby Xiao Qi Ji and parents Mei Xiang and Tian Tian—to return to China at the end of 2023.

"It will certainly be bittersweet," said zoo spokeswoman Annalisa Meyer of the eventual departure of the trio. But she also expects the zoo and the Conservation Biology Institute and China Wildlife and Conservation Association will come to a fresh agreement on a new panda loan program when the time comes.

"We have every expectation that our panda program will continue," Meyer said.

The National Zoo's history with pandas dates back to 1972, when the Chinese government gave a pair—male Hsing-Hsing and female Ling-Ling—as a gift to commemorate President Richard Nixon's historic diplomatic visit to China. The pair became one of the zoo's most popular attractions for decades, although they never successfully managed to breed.

Bob Woodward to take on final days of Trump's presidency

NEW YORK (AP)—Bob Woodward's next book finds him in the familiar world of documenting a presidency's ending.

Woodward is teaming with Washington Post colleague Robert Costa on a book about the waning days of Donald Trump's administration and on the initial phase of Joe Biden's presidency. The book does not yet have a title or release date.

In 1976, Woodward and then-fellow Washington Post reporter Carl Bernstein collaborated on the best-selling "The Final Days," what was then an unusually detailed and devastating account of President Richard Nixon as he neared being forced out of office over the Watergate scandal the reporters helped break.

Woodward already has written two best-sellers on Trump, "Fear" and "Rage."

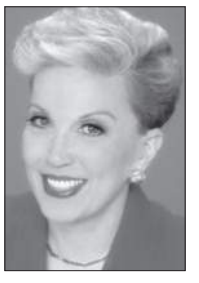
For the new book, Woodward and Costa will have competition, from other Post reporters. Penguin Press announced Monday that Philip Rucker and Carol Leonnig, co-authors of the Trump book "A Very Stable Genius," are writing about his last year in office and his loss to Biden. There is currently no title or release date.

Boyfriend shows true colors after lung cancer diagnosis

DEAR ABBY

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

FROM UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE



Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

DEAR ABBY: I need your opinion. I have been with the same guy for 27 years. We never married because we were both married before, and I wasn't into doing it again. I have stuck by him through sickness, hard times and whatever else.

Four months ago I was diagnosed with small cell lung cancer. I stopped by his house this week to pick up a rug scrubber and walked in on him having sex with some woman. I feel hurt, angry, mad, sad. It's like, WHY? Do you think he has been doing this and he just got caught or what?

I didn't say anything. I just left. He called me later and said it was over between us because I'm sick and "can't do anything." I'm in shock. I don't know what to think. I have always been there for him. So why, now that I'm sick and I need him the most, has he turned his back on me?

BLINDSIDED IN OHIO

DEAR BLINDSIDED: I am so, so sorry that you had to find out this way—when the chips are down—that the man you have been involved with for 27 years isn't much of a man after all. I DO think he has been doing this all these years.

Now it is time to marshal your friends and family and let them know what's going on. If you have been a caring and supportive friend or relative, they should be supportive during this challenging time. The American Cancer Society has support groups for people with cancer if you need someone to talk to. Its website is cancer.org. Please know you are in my thoughts and prayers for both a spiritual and physical recovery.

■ ■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: My family is getting torn apart by my older brother's issue with me. It has become worse over the years, even after his marriage.

He seems to be upset with how my life is progressing, and to upset me, he has been copying everything I do. He got engaged and married around the same time I did. He also got a dog right after I did, bought a car right after me and decided he wanted to start a family as soon as my wife and I announced we are having a baby.

My parents constantly make excuses about why his actions are justified. I no longer know what to do. I tried to reconcile with him, but he rebuffed me and says he hates me. It has reached the point that I don't want to be around any of my family anymore because they defend him on everything, despite the facts. What should I do? I seem to be the only person trying to reconcile the relationship and fix/reunite my family.

SAD SIBLING IN NEW JERSEY

DEAR SIBLING: I find it hard to believe that your family would side with a sibling who declares he "hates" his brother and refuses attempts to reconcile. It's important for your mental health that you separate emotionally from your brother. By that I mean dial back the resentment, live your life with your wife and child and stop obsessing about what your brother does. That he literally follows in your footsteps shows he either admires the choices you make, or that he has no imagination of his own. Neither of these should be a problem for YOU.

Abby shares more than 100 of her favorite recipes in two booklets: "Abby's Favorite Recipes" and "More Favorite Recipes by Dear Abby." Send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $16 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Cookbooklet Set, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

Pastimes

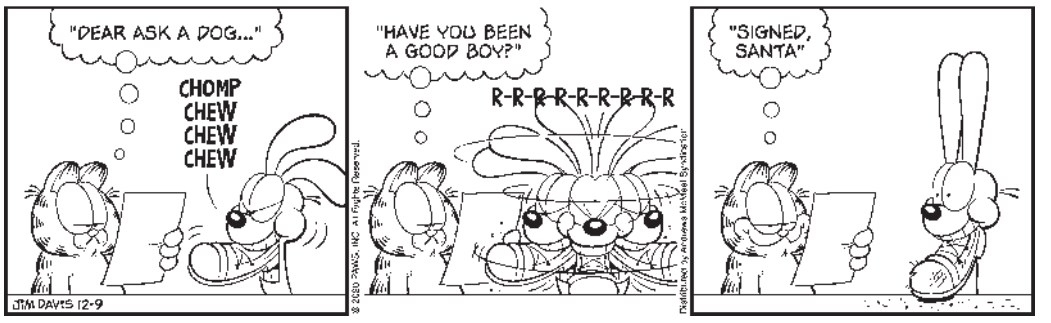
Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

THANKS FOR HELPING ME MAIL MY LETTER TO SANTA.
IT SURE WAS HEAVY.
THOSE BIG ENVELOPES ONLY HOLD A COUPLE HUNDRED PAGES. THAT'S WHY I USED A BOX.
I HOPE SANTA DOESN'T THROW HIS BACK OUT WHEN HE GETS IT.
ALL I CAN SAY IS, THIS YEAR SANTA HAD BETTER BRING EVERYTHING ON MY LIST! I'VE BEEN EXTREMELY GOOD ALL YEAR!
WHAT ABOUT THE NOODLE INCIDENT?
NO ONE CAN PROVE I DID THAT!!

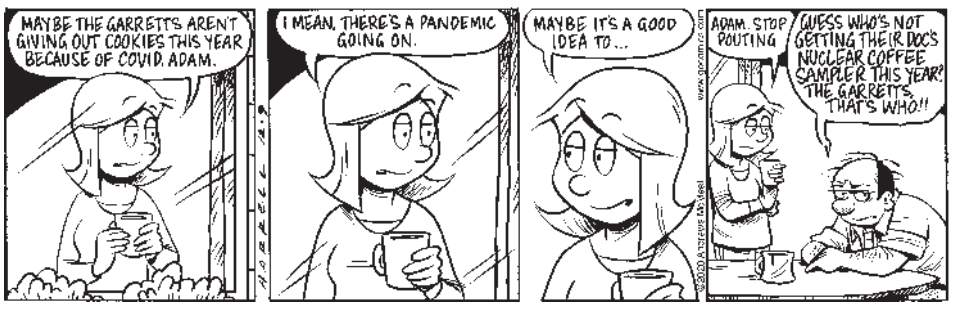
Garfield®

By Jim Davis



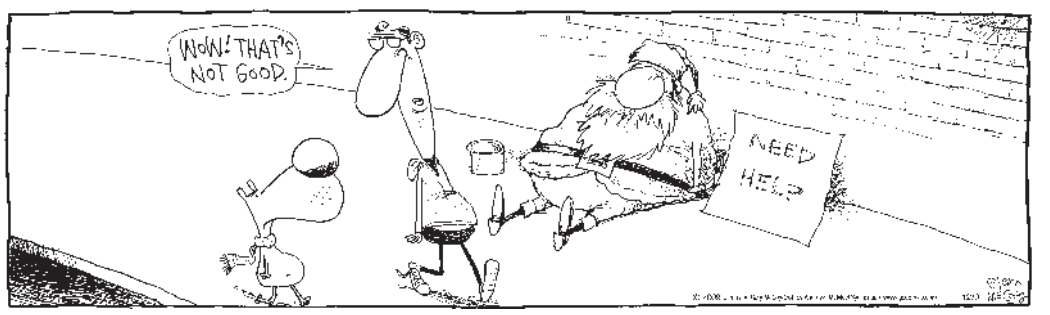
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset


MAYBE THE GARRETTS AREN'T GIVING OUT COOKIES THIS YEAR BECAUSE OF COVID, ADAM.
I MEAN, THERE'S A PANDEMIC GOING ON.
MAYBE IT'S A GOOD IDEA TO...
ADAM, STOP POUTING
GUESS WHO'S NOT GETTING THEIR DOC'S NUCLEAR COFFEE SAMPLER THIS YEAR? THE GARRETTS. THAT'S WHO!!

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy



CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

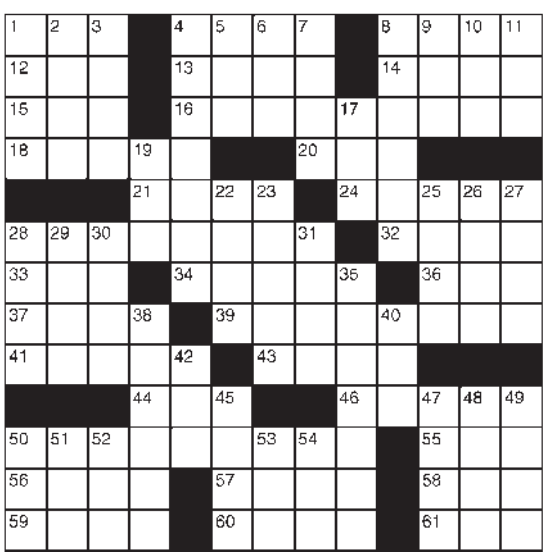
ACROSS
1 Aug. follower
4 Martial art
8 October birthstone
12 Roman 1101
13 Related
14 Pleasing
15 Scrap
16 Clerical attire
18 Tropical fruit
20 Kimono closer
21 "Understood"
24 Modify
28 Periodic table listings
32 "Fight Club" actor Jared
33 Head of st.
34 Sneeze sound
36 Squealer
37 Slightly
39 Chem lab fluids
41 Sandwich shops
43 Leak out slowly
44 Pester
46 Accumulated, as debt
50 Dinner roll shapes
55 Lawyers' gp.
56 NBA's Archibald
57 Skater Lipinski
58 Table support
59 Patricia of "Hud"
60 "Pygmalion" writer
61 "All bets — off"

DOWN
1 Urban haze
2 Off-white
3 Pocket bread
4 Waters south of Borneo
5 Guitar's kin
6 Insult, slangily
7 Aware of
8 "Anna Christie" playwright
9 Brooch
10 Do something
11 Guitar master Paul
17 CEO's deg.
19 Pep
22 Letter extras (Abbr.)
23 Community spirit
25 Seabird
26 Coup d'—
27 Goes bad
28 "Zounds!"
29 Earring site
30 Wicked
31 Only
35 Supervised
38 Christmas tree shimmer
40 Clean air org.
42 Pouch
45 Understands
47 "The Lion King" lioness
48 Taxi alternative
49 Senate aide
50 Anderson Cooper's channel
51 "Norma —"
52 Greek vowel
53 "Unh-unh"
54 — -la-la

Solution time: 23 mins.

A	L	E	G		A	T	O	P		B	A	H
F	E	N	A		C	H		A		R	D	A
B	I	G	F	A	M	I		Y		E	A	R
			T	F	F	S		M	I	A	M	I
A	T	B	A	T			D	E	S	K		
B	E	A	N		S	P		N	O	H		S
E	H	R		O	N	S	E	I		R	E	O
L	I	F	E	V	E	S	I		D	E	A	D
		I	S	E	E			D	O	E	R	S
P	A	G	E	R		O	M	E	N			
I	S	H		B	O	N	D	F	U	N	D	S
N	I	T		L	N	I	V		T	I	N	A
C	A	S		Y	E	T			S	N	A	P

Yesterday's answer 12-9



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955!** 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Felicity Huffman, 58; Donny Osmond, 63; Beau Bridges, 79; Dame Judi Dench, 86.

Happy Birthday: You'll have plenty to juggle as you push your way forward. Personal and professional goals will motivate you and promote the success you want. A craving to seek adventure and excitement will push you in a direction that will expand your mind and test your skills. Mental stimulation will lead to partnerships that become life-changing experiences. Embrace the future with optimism. Your numbers are 8, 13, 22, 27, 30, 33, 45.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19):* Keep moving. Channel your energy into something constructive. Refuse to let uncertainty cause you to miss out on something that can push you to the top of your game. Work alongside someone who shares your dream. Start a new chapter. ✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* Examine documents, make updates and create a dialogue with someone you live or work with to ensure your intentions are clear and the outcome is doable. Don't let uncertainty set in when paying attention to detail is all that's required. ✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* Keep your facts straight, don't venture from the truth and question anything that doesn't sound right. Focus on partnerships and how to make the most of a situation that requires emotional adjustments. Handle discrepancies carefully, and you'll avoid a misunderstanding. ✪✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* Be careful who you trust with sensitive information. Look for alternative ways to get things done. Keeping the peace will encourage better relationships with those close to you. Expectations will be high, and the payback expected if you ask for help too costly. ✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* You'll learn a lot through the experiences you face today. Be observant. Protect yourself from persuasive individuals trying to take advantage of your generosity. Offer suggestions and a helping hand, but don't pay for others' mistakes. ✪✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22):* Spend more time doing what pleases you and less time picking up after someone. Don't expect to get the whole truth from someone close to you. Go directly to the source to verify facts. Set the pace, and protect your rights. ✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* Gather information, put your plan in place and be proactive. Expect someone to interfere with or upset your schedule. Being evasive will not help you gain support. Reach out to those who share your beliefs. Rely on experience to guide you to victory. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* Use your imagination, and you'll find a way to turn your dream into a reality. Make a personal change that will lead to more significant opportunities. Consider a lifestyle that will ease stress and encourage personal growth. Romance is favored. ✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* Stay positive, and work with what's available. How you go about your business will set the stage for future endeavors. Speak up and share your opinions and plans. Take control instead of letting someone else run the show. ✪✪✪✪

CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19):* Listen, digest the information you receive and consider how best to use what you hear. Getting your facts straight before you debate an issue will make you think twice about the information you share. Be selective, diplomatic and kind. ✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18):* Take better care of your health. Avoid situations that deal with institutions. Stick to the tasks that require your attention. A financial gain will lift your spirits and encourage you to pursue your goals. An offer will be too good to refuse. ✪✪✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* Nurture partnerships. Expect someone to take advantage of you if you don't stand up for your rights. Work with the people you are dealing with, and find common ground to overcome any unfairness that prevails. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are adventuresome, outspoken and persuasive. You are original and charismatic.

Visit Eugenialast.com, or join Eugenia on Twitter/Facebook/LinkedIn.

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

					9	5		
					8	7	4	1
				4	6	2		3
			7	9		1	6	5
1	3	5 7	4					
3		2	1					
5			3					
4	9	6	8					

Difficulty Level ★★★ 12/09

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

3	4	7	9	8	2	1	5	6
9	8	6	1	5	7	3	4	2
1	5	2	6	4	3	8	9	7
6	1	3	2	7	4	9	8	5
4	2	9	5	6	8	7	1	3
5	7	8	3	9	1	6	2	4
2	9	1	4	3	6	5	7	8
7	3	5	8	2	9	4	6	1
8	6	4	7	1	5	2	3	9

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

WEARING SAFETY GEAR AT WORK Solution: 9 letters

K	C	I	T	S	P	A	H	C	B	O	O	T	S	T
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P	C	D	S	M	I	N	E	R	S	S	A	L	O	E
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Anchor, Aprons, Arborist, Armor, Boots, Chapstick, Chef, Cleaner, Collar, Cover, Doctor, Earmuff, Earplugs, Electrical, Gear, Glasses, Gloves, Goggles, Gowns, Hat, Jacket, Lanyard, Mask, Mechanic, Miners, Mouthguard, Nets, Nurse, Oven Mitts, Overall, Pants, Plumbers, PPE, Roofers, Rope, Scrubs, Shield, Steel Toe, Suits, Test, Vests, Visor

Yesterday's Answer: Imagine

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‘Sore as hell’ LeBron maps future with Lakers

LOS ANGELES (AP)—After LeBron James emerged from the longest season in NBA history with a fourth championship ring, he returned home and planned the first Christmas family vacation of his adult life.

That’s when James learned that his 17th NBA offseason would be unprecedentedly short.

When James was told the NBA intended to resume games on Dec. 22, just 72 days after the Lakers beat Miami to win the title, the superstar admits he reacted with a mild expletive.

“Just being completely honest, I wasn’t expecting that,” James said Monday in his first public comments since the NBA champions opened training camp.

“Early conversations were going on, and I was hearing there would be kind of a mid-January start,” James said. “Training camp would start after Christmas, and we would have the opportunity to spend Christmas with our families. ... I had to switch up a lot of things. I just started preparing my mind and preparing my body.”

James still reported to camp ready last week for his 18th NBA season and the pursuit of yet another banner with the Lakers, who added an impressive amount of veteran talent in the abbreviated offseason for their repeat quest.

James also showed up with a new two-year, $85 million contract extension through the 2022-23 season, setting his future in Los Angeles through his 20th NBA campaign.

James chose that year deliberately: His oldest son, LeBron James Jr., will graduate from high school in 2023. Bronny is a sophomore at private Sierra Canyon School, where he played a reserve role on the basketball team last season, and LeBron has previously spoken of his fond dream to play in the NBA with—or against—his son.

“The best thing about it is the year I’ll be a free agent will be the same year my oldest son graduates high school,” James said of his new deal. “I’ll have some options to see, for me personally, what I want to do (going) forwar —being around my family, being around my son more, or continue to play this game I love with great health and great spirits. We’ll see.”

Whether that happens, and whether it will be in Los Angeles, won’t be certain for three long years. James intends to make the most of the meantime.

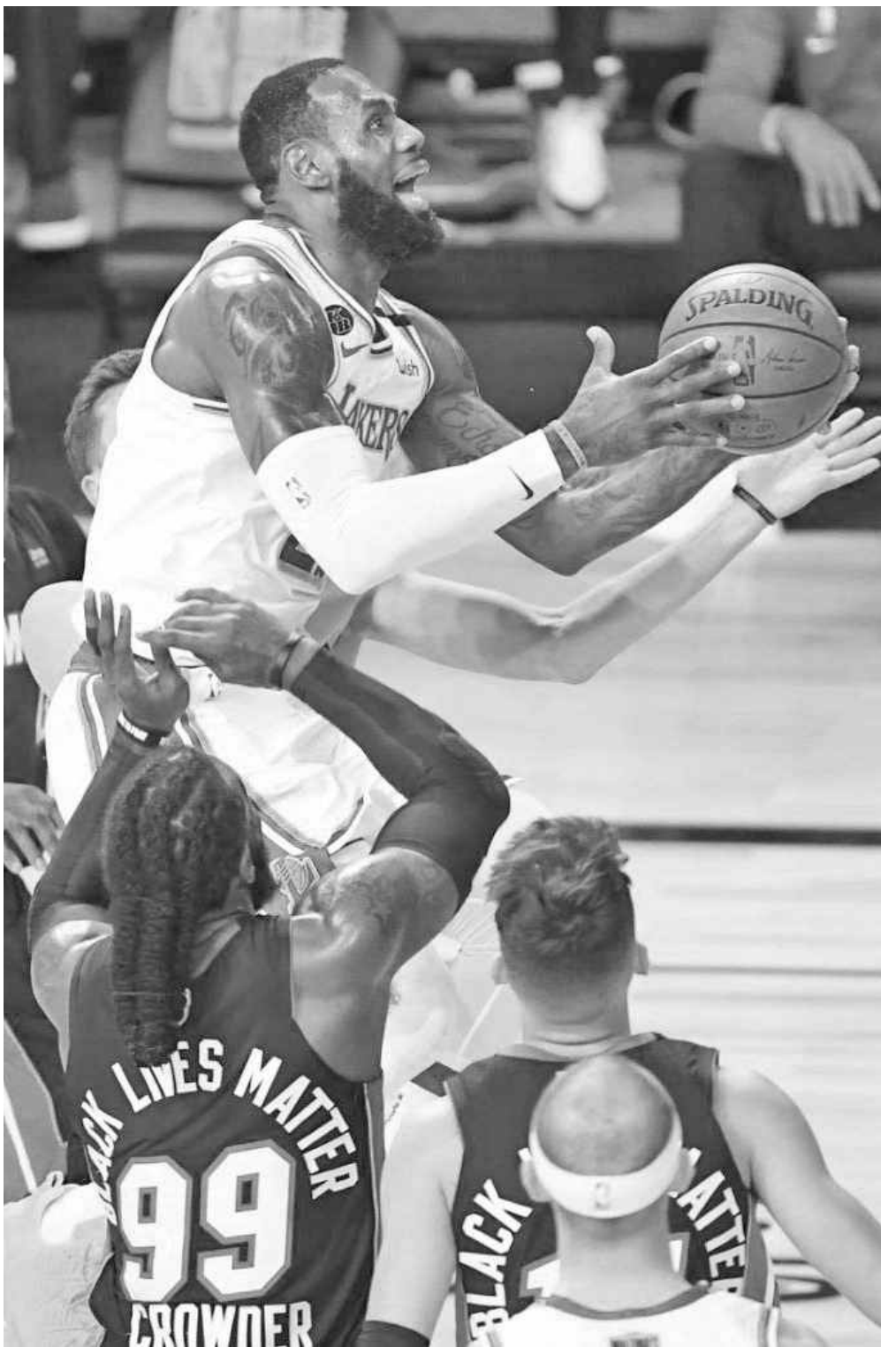
James will shoulder the physical challenges of this difficult year, but it isn’t easy: He said he was “sore as hell” Monday, although that’s normal every year after the first two preseason practices.

The uniqueness of 2020 has forced James and the Lakers to consider whether they should practice load management this season.

LeBron has largely declined to follow other stars’ strategy of strategic absences from games in recent years: He played in all 82 games for Cleveland in 2017-18, and after an injury-plagued 2018-19 in LA, he only missed four games last season.

Still, James has played 1,265 career regular-season games—already the 33rd-most in league history—and an NBA-record 260 playoff contests as he heads toward his 36th birthday later this month.

James and the Lakers haven’t decided on their plans for the regular season, with James saying there’s “a fine line” between strategic rest and unnecessary inactivity. He does sound amenable to limited action in the preseason, which begins Friday.



AP

In this Oct. 11, 2020 file photo, Los Angeles Lakers’ LeBron James (23) goes up for a shot against the Miami Heat defense during the first half in Game 6 of the NBA Finals in Lake Buena Vista, Fla.

“We’re going to be as smart as I can be in making sure that my body and making sure that I’m ready to go,” James said. “Every game matters, but we’re competing for something that’s high. I understand that with the shortened (training camp) and the offseason is going to be the shortest in any professional sports ever, we’re going to be very conscious about what we do going forward and with me personally.”

Coach Frank Vogel says it’s too early to make a decision about how much James will play in the preseason or in the regular season.

“We don’t want to underdo it and then he’s not ready to play in real games, but we obviously don’t want to overdo it,” Vogel said of the preseason. “So really don’t know where that’s going to land. I expect we’ll probably see him some, but not a ton.”

No matter what James decides to do this season and into the future, the Lakers clearly have no worries about his long-term viability as a difference-making star. General manager Rob Pelinka signed James last week to a maximum contract extension that will keep him together with Anthony Davis for at least the next three seasons—an enviable situation for any team.

Pelinka says James’ success is rooted in the versatility of his game, along with his intellectual ability to excel with more than pure athleticism.

“Because of those gifts, he’s going to continue to be a dominant player well beyond what the regular, ordinary NBA player would be able to do,” Pelinka said. “It wasn’t even a debate for us. We think he’s going to be very effective and provide extraordinary value for every year he decides to play as a Laker.”

“What was especially satisfying and exciting about (the latest championship) is that now you can see, with the legacy he’s establishing as a Laker, that his greatness will be defined here. I’m sure he’ll hang many jerseys someday, but we hope one of those will be a Lakers jersey,” Pelinka added.

Rockets coach unsure when Harden will report to camp

HOUSTON (AP)—James Harden hasn’t reported to Houston Rockets camp and coach Stephen Silas said Monday that he didn’t know when the All-Star guard would arrive.

The Rockets had their second workout of training camp on Monday and afterward the new coach addressed the absence of the disgruntled star who reportedly wants to be traded.

“As far as timetable, there’s no timetable as far as I know,” Silas told reporters when asked when Harden would arrive. “And it is a setback. You want your best player to be here. And there’s a short window ... I have to be honest and understand this is a setback not having one of the best players in the NBA here.”

Silas, who was hired to replace Mike D’Antoni, said he doesn’t even know if Harden is in Houston and said the team hasn’t discussed any possible penalties for the superstar if he doesn’t report soon.

“I’ve been in situations before where it was a holdout, and we just kind of handled each individual situation on its own merit and individually,” he said. “As far as any sort of punishment, we haven’t even crossed that bridge yet. We’re just trying to work piece by piece.”

The Rockets are intent on keeping Harden as the centerpiece of their team. They shipped Russell Westbrook to Washington last week in exchange for John Wall after Westbrook’s one-year pairing with Harden didn’t pan out.

Silas isn’t sure why the eight-time All-Star and 2018 MVP is not at camp and wouldn’t speculate about the motivation for his absence.

“What the reasoning is, is on him,” Silas said. “He’s the one who can explain why or why not he’s here. For me to make inferences and think about the possibilities isn’t real to me. What’s real is he’s not here and he has a reason, but that’s on him to tell whoever what his reason is.”

Heftier fines

The NBA is not going to make much money from fans filling its arenas this season. Which is all the more reason it needs to keep its national television partners—Turner/TNT and ESPN/ABC— happy.

The league sent out a memo to teams Monday updating the ground rules for resting players during the condensed season. The league will come down hard on teams that sit healthy players for nationally televised games—with fines of $100,000 or more—but it will cut some slack to teams and players in non-national games.

These regulations are not that much different than what the NBA has had in place for the past three years. However, in a year the television money is the league’s lifeline, there is a heftier fine for sitting the league’s stars.

Westbrook fine working with Beal

The recent trade that landed nine-time All-Star Russell Westbrook in the nation’s capital beside prolific scorer Bradley Beal has many wondering how the on-court pairing is going to work out.

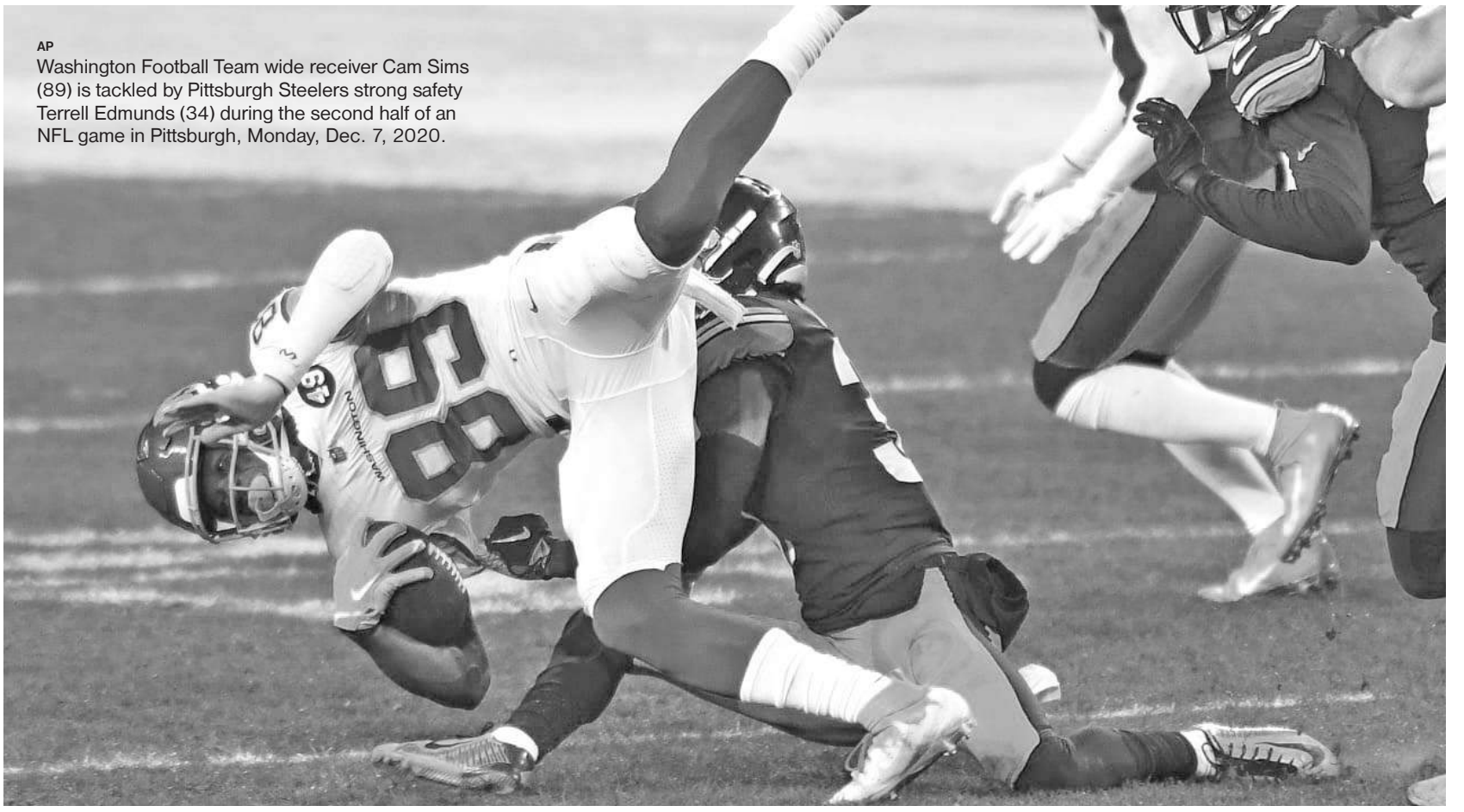
According to Westbrook, the two will work out just fine as it’s on him to help elevate the Beal.

“It’s going to be a learning process. Brad’s going to have to learn me but most importantly I’m going to have to learn Brad because he’s in a position where he can take off another step,” Westbrook said on the Off The Bench podcast. “My job is to make sure I help him and make the game easy for him.”

Westbrook has played alongside a handful of talented players throughout his career -- talented might be an understatement. Kevin Durant, Paul George, and James Harden, twice. All of whom experienced statistical and playoff success beside The Brodie.

Washington’s first preseason game is scheduled for Dec. 13 against the Brooklyn Nets. If the two stars play, that’ll be Wizards fans’ first opportunity to see what the duo has to offer this season.

Washington ends Pittsburgh's perfect season



AP
Washington Football Team wide receiver Cam Sims (89) is tackled by Pittsburgh Steelers strong safety Terrell Edmunds (34) during the second half of an NFL game in Pittsburgh, Monday, Dec. 7, 2020.

PITTSBURGH (AP)—The Pittsburgh Steelers spent three months shaking off whatever 2020 threw at them. Schedule changes. Injuries to a handful of impact players. The ever-present threat of COVID-19.

Through the chaos, they kept winning. Sometimes pretty. Sometimes ugly. Sometimes a little of both in the same game. Through it all, they insisted they were well aware of their flaws. pointing out time and again the only thing perfect about them was their record.

So much for that.

Pittsburgh's bid for an unbeaten season is over. Washington's—yes, Washington's—quest for an unlikely division title may just be starting.

Alex Smith threw for 296 yards and a touchdown, Dustin Hopkins kicked a tiebreaking 45-yard field goal with 2:04 remaining, and Washington rallied for a 23-17 victory on Monday in one of the biggest surprises of the NFL season.

"We've been down for such a long time and we're trying to rebuild ourselves and build up," first-year coach Ron Rivera said. "This is something we can build off of."

The Steelers (11-1) missed a chance to clinch a playoff berth and dropped into a tie with defending Super Bowl champion Kansas City for the best record in the AFC with four weeks remaining. They squandered a 14-point lead.

"It stinks," Pittsburgh quarterback Ben Roethlisberger said. "Been a while since we lost a game. It's not a good feeling."

The Steelers were 10-point favorites while facing a team that hadn't won three straight since 2018 and hadn't won in Pittsburgh since 1991. Washington won the Super Bowl that season. The club's expectations this year are far more modest. Yet a day after the New York Giants won at Seattle, Washington (5-7) kept pace while giving the lowly NFC East its second marquee victory in 25ish hours.

"We're on a roll," said defensive end Montez Sweat, who knocked down three Roethlisberger passes. "This is the kind of football we've been wanting to play since Game 1."

It's the kind of football the Steelers had played since Game 1. The best start in the franchise's 87-year history came to an abrupt halt on a rare Monday late afternoon game. The NFL pushed the contest back a day as part of the fallout from a COVID-19 outbreak in Baltimore that forced the league to postpone the Ravens' visit to Heinz Field three times.

Pittsburgh coach Mike Tomlin insisted his club would not use the disruption as an excuse. But the weight of what the Steelers have been dealing with, combined with second-half injuries to inside linebacker Robert Spillane and cornerback Joe Haden, made for a tough day.

Roethlisberger passed for 305 yards and two touchdowns, but was picked off by Jon Bostic—a former Steeler—with 1:59 remaining. Hopkins added another 45-yard field goal and Pittsburgh's last-gasp drive ended with the ball near midfield and Washington's players sprinting off in celebration while the Steelers trudged to the locker room.

"We're getting to that point of the season when you've got to be sharp in all areas, your whole team, both sides of the ball," Roethlisberger said. "There can be all kinds of distractions, changes of this, that and the other. At the end of the day, we've got to go play good football."

For the first time in a long time, the Steelers didn't. At least not enough of it.

Still, even after Smith hit Logan Thomas for a 15-yard touchdown pass to tie the game at 17, the Steelers had a chance. They drove into field goal range but rather than have fill-in Matthew Wright—promoted from the practice squad due to an injury to Chris Boswell—attempt a 45-yard field goal into the open end at Heinz, the Steelers went for it. Roethlisberger's heave to rookie running back Anthony McFarland Jr. fell incomplete and Smith calmly drove Washington 45 yards in nine plays to set up the winning score.

"I didn't feel good about putting that (kick) on him," Tomlin said of Wright.

Bills 34, 49ers 24

Josh Allen threw for 375 yards, tied a career high with four touchdown passes and the Buffalo Bills stayed in sole possession of first place in the AFC East with a victory over the San Francisco 49ers.

Buffalo (9-3) moved a step closer to winning its division for the first time since 1995 thanks to a nearly flawless performance from Allen. The 24-year-old quarterback was stellar against the 49ers, completing 32 of 40 passes with no interceptions.

He threw touchdown passes to Cole Beasley, Dawson Knox, Isaiah McKenzie and Gabriel Davis as the Bills built a 17-7 halftime lead and controlled the majority of the second half.

The Bills are one game ahead of the Miami Dolphins with four games left for both teams.

San Francisco (5-7) lost in its first game at its adopted home in Arizona. The 49ers will be based in Glendale for at least the next three weeks after Santa Clara County issued strict new coronavirus protocols that forced the team to find a temporary new home.

It was Allen's fourth game of the season with at least 300 yards passing and three touchdowns, which set a franchise record. Jim Kelly did it three times in 1991 and Drew Bledsoe three times in 2002.

The Bills had a much more pleasant trip to the desert than three weeks ago, when they lost a 32-30 heartbreaker to the Arizona Cardinals. That was the game when DeAndre Hopkins made a stunning catch over three Buffalo defenders with 2 seconds left for the game-winning score.

San Francisco has had several recent injuries at its slot cornerback position and struggled to cover Beasley, who had a career-high 130 yards receiving on nine catches.

State Farm Stadium—which is home to the division-rival Arizona Cardinals—was dressed up to make the 49ers feel slightly more at home. There were San Francisco banners hanging on the walls along the sidelines and the videoboard showed Niners highlights and flashed messages like "Faithful to the Bay."

Seattle vs Columbus in MLS Cup finals

SEATTLE (AP)—Gustav Svensson scored off a corner kick in the final moments of second-half stoppage time, and the Seattle Sounders beat Minnesota United 3-2 on Monday night to advance to the MLS Cup finals.

Seattle scored three times in the final 15 minutes of regulation and stoppage time to stun Minnesota and claim the Western Conference championship for the fourth time in the past five seasons.

Seattle will travel to Columbus to face the Crew in the MLS Cup final on Saturday.

Will Bruin scored in the 75th minute to pull Seattle within 2-1 and set the stage for the wild final moments when the Sounders scored twice off corner kicks. Raul Ruidiaz had a fortunate bounce fall at his feet before he beat goalkeeper Dayne St. Clair to pull the Sounders even at 2-2 just before the end of the 90 minutes.

Seattle continued to press for a winner and nearly got it from Ruidiaz only to see his shot hit the outside of the post. But Svensson came through by rising above the Minnesota defenders on the final corner kick.

Seattle will attempt to become the first repeat champs in MLS since the Los Angeles Galaxy in 2011-12.

For most of the night it appeared the young, upstart Loons would be on their way to Columbus to play in their first final in Minnesota's fourth MLS season. Minnesota had limited scoring chances but took advantage of the ones they did get, taking the lead on Emanuel Reynoso's perfect free kick from 30 yards in the first half. Defender Bakaye Dibassy scored on a header off an assist from Reynoso midway through the second half, and the Loons appeared headed for the final.

Reynoso continued to show himself as one of the bright young stars in the league following his move in September from Boca Juniors in Argentina to join the Loons. Reynoso had a part in Minnesota's final 11 goals of the season, either scoring or assisting on each one of them.

But Seattle's late substitutions made a huge difference. Bruin came on and almost immediately scored and the late additions of Brad Smith and Svensson proved critical.

It was just the second time in team history two different substitutes scored for the Sounders. Seattle has now won 14 straight playoff matches at home.

Earlier last Sunday, the Columbus Crew made it to the finals after Artur scored the decisive goal in a 1-0 home win over New England Revolution.

The Crew, whose only MLS crown came in 2008, advanced to the championship match thanks to Brazilian midfielder Artur's strike in the 59th minute.

"We're not in this thing to get to the end to lose. We want to win the championship," Crew coach Caleb Porter said.

"We have a great group. Great goal we scored. We should have scored more."

The winning goal from the 24-year-old Artur came after Argentine Lucas Zelarayan's long pass arrived at Ghana-born defender Jonathan Mensah, who chipped the ball into the penalty area.

Artur took the ball and smacked a left-footed shot just inside the near post and beyond the outstretched fingertips of diving New England goalkeeper Matt Turner.

White Sox bolster bullpen with Lynn trade

TEXAS (AP)— The Chicago White Sox are set to acquire a big workhorse for their starting rotation.

Lance Lynn is being traded from the Texas Rangers to the White Sox, according to a person with direct knowledge of the deal. The person spoke on condition of anonymity to The Associated Press late Monday night, at the end of the first day of Major League Baseball's virtual winter meeting, because there was no announcement from either team.

Lynn would be reunited in Chicago with new manager Tony La Russa. Lynn was a rookie pitcher for the 2011 World Series champion St. Louis Cardinals, who beat the Rangers in seven games in the last season La Russa managed in the big leagues before returning to the White Sox this offseason.

The 6-foot-5, 250-pound Lynn was 22-14 in 46 starts the past two seasons for the Rangers, with 335 strikeouts over 292 1/3 innings. The right-hander has an $8 million salary in 2021, the final season of a $30 million, three-year contract he signed with Texas two winters ago.

The on-the-rise White Sox are coming off their first playoff appearance since 2008, going 35-25 and finishing tied for second in the AL Central before losing to Oakland in their wild-card series. Lynn would be in the top three of a rotation that features right-hander Lucas Giolito and lefty Dallas Keuchel.

AP
In this Aug. 19, 2020 file photo, Texas Rangers starting pitcher Lance Lynn works against a San Diego Padres batter during the first inning of a baseball game in San Diego.

In nine big league seasons with the Cardinals, Minnesota Twins, New York Yankees and Rangers, the 33-year-old Lynn is 104-71 with a 3.57 ERA in 260 games (236 starts).

Texas was an AL-worst 22-38 in the pandemic-shortened season and had three 22-year-old rookies in its starting lineup on the last day of the season.

Managing partner Ray Davis said the Rangers were still in a rebuilding mode earlier Monday during the formal introduction of new general manager Chris Young. Texas named Young last week to that role after Jon Daniels had served as both president of baseball operations and GM since 2013. Daniels, who had been GM since 2005, is still president of baseball operations.

While the Rangers didn't move Lynn at the Aug. 31 trade deadline, they did send All-Star lefty Mike Minor to Oakland. After the season, they declined an $18 million option on right-hander Corey Kluber, the two-time AL Cy Young Award winner they acquired last winter who pitched just one inning before a shoulder injury ended his season.

Japanese star up for MLB bidding

Japanese star pitcher Tomoyuki Sugano has been posted by the Yomiuri Giants and is available for bidding to major league teams.

The bidding starts at 8 a.m. EST Tuesday and runs through 5 p.m. EST on Jan. 7.

A right-hander who turned 31 on Oct. 11, Sugano was 14-2 with a 1.97 ERA and three shutouts in 20 games last season, striking out 131 and walking 25 in 137 1/3 innings while allowing 97 hits. He is 101-49 with a 2.32 ERA over eight seasons in Japan.

Sugano started for Japan against the United States in the semifinal of the 2017 World Baseball Classic. He did not get a decision in the Americans' 2-1 win, allowing an unearned run and three hits in six innings with six strikeouts and a walk.

Under the posting agreement, the fee would be 20% of the first $25 million of a major league contract, including earned bonuses and options. The percentage drops to 17.5% of the next $25 million and 15% of any amount over $50 million.

Meanwhile, the Los Angeles Angels acquired closer Raisel Iglesias from the Cincinnati Reds for right-hander Noe Ramirez and a player to be named or cash Monday in the first trade of the week of baseball's winter meetings.

Iglesias has been the Reds' closer for the past four seasons, racking up 100 saves in 114 opportunities over that stretch with a career 3.15 ERA and a 1.12 WHIP.

Iglesias will make $9,125,000 next season in the final year of his contract. The trade allows the Reds to save money while putting a cornerstone in the Angels' bullpen, which is being rebuilt by rookie general manager Perry Minasian this offseason.

"Bullpen is an area we'd like to improve, and we feel like he's a positive addition in that area," Minasian said. "He has a history of pitching late in games, a history of pitching in big games. Not only did he fit from a talent standpoint, but a makeup standpoint. He loves to pitch and loves to compete. He's not scared of the big moment, and we're very excited to have him."

Although Minasian didn't state it outright, the Angels could be in position to make significant gains this month because of wealthy owner Arte Moreno's willingness to spend money in what could be a depressed free agent market due to many teams' lost revenue from the coronavirus pandemic. Moreno said last month that the Angels' payroll won't go down this season as he attempts to earn the club's first playoff victory since 2009.

CHAVEZ

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School, Tinian Middle School, and Hopwood Middle School did not qualify for the team honors due to lack of required runners (at least three plus ghost runner).

Chambers, No. 5 finisher William Lee (16:07), No. 7 Christian Newman (16:28), and No. 8 Gyu Hyeon Park (16:46) accounted for the Geckos' points, while No. 6 Elijay (16:24) and No. 10 David (17:47) Ye and No. 12 Dwight Crisostomo (18:58) delivered for SCS (ghost runner in last place was added to the team's score).

In the girls U14 division, Agape got 17 points, beating SIS anew in a close fight, as the Lady Geckos earned 20 markers.

Since Chavez's Mt. Carmel School did not have enough runners to qualify for the team awards, the top point (1) was awarded to the runner-up Wang, while No. 3 finisher Serena Chen (17:16), No. 6 Esther Xu (19:43), and No. 7 Ruth Zhang (20:49) scored the needed points for Agape.

SIS, on the other hand, drew 2 points from Sikkel, No. 4 finisher Phoenix Gross (19:14), No. 5 Rebecca Eaton (19:22), and No. 9 Hoo Wang (22:56).

Mt. Carmel School's Kaithlynn Chavez shows her first place medal in the girls U14 division. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
Agape Christian School students (in red tops) lead runners to the course during the finals of the 2020-2021 Public School System/ Northern Marianas Athletics All Schools Cross Country Series last Saturday at the CPA Airport Field.

CORRY

From Page 20

linan (15), and Christopher Alepuyo (14).

In other results, Christian Camacho and Glen Pangelinan topped last weekend's Big Boy ATV and Veteran classes, respectively.

Camacho raced with the veteran class riders and they did five laps of the course. Camacho was also the first overall finisher in group. Pangelinan, who led race after the first lap, was second overall, but topped the Veteran class, as he defeated Melvin Cepeda, Boss Alvarez, and Ray Yumul.

Meanwhile, MRA would like to thank Rufina, LLC, Mobil Marianas, 4Ever CNMI, and Pacific Trading, Co. for supporting last weekend's races, which also featured competitions in Peewee I and II peewee II, and Minis I and II. Results of the fourth other classes will be reported in *Saipan Tribune*'s Thursday edition.

MRA will still hold regular competitions and practice rides at the Kan Pacific grounds even as the group continues to work on clearing the former CowTown Raceway area to prepare for the construction of the Marianas Motocross Park.

JOSEPH CHIN
The Marianas Racing Association familia poses for a photo before starting the series of races last Sunday at the Kan Pacific grounds.

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Corry, Cuki show way in MRA races

JOSEPH CHIN
Corry Pangelinan brake taps during the Novice Open class race.

JOSEPH CHIN
Riders compete in the Expert Open class in the Marianas Racing Association event last Sunday at the Kan Pacific grounds.

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
roselyn_monroyo@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Corry Pangelinan made it back-to-back, while Cuki Alvarez this time finished in solo first place, as the Marianas Racing Association held another competition last Sunday at the Kan Pacific grounds.

Pangelinan, who topped the Novice Open class race last Nov. 29, picked up where he left off, beating five other riders in his division. Pangelinan completed six laps of the course ahead of Arthur Jebehn, Byron Castro, Vince Torres, and Keoni and Ens Macaranas, and earned 25 points for dominating the novice open class, anew.

In the Expert Open class, Alvarez and six other riders had a longer race, rounding the course seven times. The MRA vice president, who tied his son, Shane, for first place in the Nov. 29 competition but lost the tiebreak (Heat 2 results), battled back in last weekend's race to take the top honors this time.

Cuki won the last three laps to move up to first place and dislodge early leader Angelito Hernaez, who was ahead after four laps. Alvarez was awarded 25 points for the win in the expert open, while Hernaez slid to second and gained 22 markers.

Shane notched 20 points to finish third and was followed by Ellery Cruz (18), Christian Camacho (16), Glen Pange-

See CORRY on Page 19

Chavez wins; Agape earns sweep

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
roselyn_monroyo@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

As predicted, Mt. Carmel School's Kaithlynn Chavez came out on top of the girls middle school race, while Agape Christian School also lived up to high expectations after clinching the overall championship in the U14 division of the 2020-2021 Public School System/Northern Marianas Athletics All Schools Cross Country Series.

Chavez, who despite joining just one qualifier was favored to win the division, did not disappoint in the finale last Saturday at the CPA Airport Field, as she outraced the entire middle school field made up of 33 runners. The Mt. Carmel student completed the 2.1-mile course in 14:01, nearly a minute ahead of boys U14 division first finisher Peter Peng (15:08) of Agape Christian School.

Joining Chavez in the Top 3 in the girls U14 division were Agape's Barbara Wang and Saipan International School's Savita Sikkel, who clocked in at 16:33 and 16:57 in the two-lap course, respectively.

In the boys U14 age group, Peng shared the podium with runner-team and fellow Agape student Joseph Li (15:21) and SIS' Casey Chambers (15:23). The Top 3 finishers in the middle school races received medals.

With Agape going 1-2 in the boys U14 division, the Torchbearers took the team honors for the second straight season after collecting 18 points (each school received points from its Top 4 finishers and the team with the lowest score wins the division championship). Peng gave Agape a point for his first place finish, while 2 markers came from Li and the remaining 15 were courtesy of No. 4 ranked Danny Cheng (15:41) and No. 11 Boxin Chen (18:17).

SIS came in second in the boys U14 with its 23 points, while Saipan Community School placed third after logging 41 markers. Mt. Carmel, Francisco M. Sablan Middle

See CHAVEZ on Page 19

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
The lead group in the girls U14 division race heads out to the course during the finals of the 2020-2021 Public School System/Northern Marianas Athletics All Schools Cross Country Series last Saturday at the CPA Airport Field.